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MEN AND WOMEN.

BY

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MEN AND WOMEN.

ANDREA DEL SARTO.

(CALLED "THE FAULTLESS PAINTER.")

BUT do not let us quarrel any more,
No, my Lucrezia; bear with me for once :
Sit down and all shall happen as you wish.
You turn your face, but does it bring your heart ?
I'll work then for your friend's friend, never fear,
Treat his own subject after his own way,
Fix his own time, accept too his own price,
And shut the money into this small hand
When next it takes mine. Will it? tenderly ?
Oh, I'll content him,—but to-morrow, Love !

I often am much wearier than you think,
This evening more than usual, and it seems
As if—forgive now—should you let me sit
Here by the window with your hand in mine
And look a half hour forth on Fiesole,
Both of one mind, as married people use,
Quietly, quietly, the evening through,
I might get up to-morrow to my work
Cheerful and fresh as ever. Let us try.
To-morrow how you shall be glad for this!
Your soft hand is a woman of itself,
And mine the man's bared breast she curls inside.
Don't count the time lost, either; you must serve
For each of the five pictures we require—
It saves a model. So! keep looking so—
My serpentining beauty, rounds on rounds!
—How could you ever prick those perfect ears,
Even to put the pearl there! oh, so sweet—
My face, my moon, my everybody's moon,
Which everybody looks on and calls his,

And, I suppose, is looked on by in turn,
While she looks—no one's : very dear, no less !
You smile ? why, there's my picture ready made.
There's what we painters call our harmony !
A common greyness silvers everything,—
All in a twilight, you and I alike
—You, at the point of your first pride in me
(That's gone you know),—but I, at every point ;
My youth, my hope, my art, being all toned down
To yonder sober pleasant Fiesole.
There's the bell clinking from the chapel-top ;
That length of convent-wall across the way
Holds the trees safer, huddled more inside ;
The last monk leaves the garden ; days decrease
And autumn grows, autumn in everything.
Eh ? the whole seems to fall into a shape
As if I saw alike my work and self
And all that I was born to be and do,
A twilight-piece. Love, we are in God's hand.
How strange now, looks the life he makes us lead !

So free we seem, so fettered fast we are :
I feel he laid the fetter : let it lie !
This chamber for example—turn your head—
All that's behind us ! you don't understand
Nor care to understand about my art,
But you can hear at least when people speak ;
And that cartoon, the second from the door
—It is the thing, Love ! so such things should be—
Behold Madonna, I am bold to say.
I can do with my pencil what I know,
What I see, what at bottom of my heart
I wish for, if I ever wish so deep—
Do easily, too—when I say perfectly
I do not boast, perhaps : yourself are judge
Who listened to the Legate's talk last week,
And just as much they used to say in France.
At any rate 'tis easy, all of it,
No sketches first, no studies, that's long past—
I do what many dream of all their lives
—Dream ? strive to do, and agonise to do,

And fail in doing. I could count twenty such
On twice your fingers, and not leave this town,
Who strive—you don't know how the others strive
To paint a little thing like that you smeared
Carelessly passing with your robes afloat,
Yet do much less, so much less, some one says,
(I know his name, no matter) so much less!
Well, less is more, Lucrezia! I am judged.
There burns a truer light of God in them,
In their vexed, beating, stuffed and stopped-up brain,
Heart, or whate'er else, than goes on to prompt
This low-pulsed forthright craftsman's hand of mine.
Their works drop groundward, but themselves, I know,
Reach many a time a heaven that's shut to me,
Enter and take their place there sure enough,
Though they come back and cannot tell the world.
My works are nearer heaven, but I sit here.
The sudden blood of these men! at a word—
Praise them, it boils, or blame them, it boils too.
I, painting from myself and to myself,

Know what I do, am unmoved by men's blame
Or their praise either. Somebody remarks
Morello's outline there is wrongly traced,
His hue mistaken—what of that ? or else,
Rightly traced and well ordered—what of that ?
Ah, but a man's reach should exceed his grasp,
Or what's a Heaven for ? all is silver-grey
Placid and perfect with my art—the worse !
I know both what I want and what might gain—
And yet how profitless to know, to sigh
“ Had I been two, another and myself,
Our head would have o'erlooked the world ! ” No
doubt.

Yonder's a work, now, of that famous youth
The Urbinate who died five years ago.
('Tis copied, George Vasari sent it me).
Well, I can fancy how he did it all,
Pouring his soul, with kings and popes to see,
Reaching, that Heaven might so replenish him,
Above and through his art—for it gives way ;

That arm is wrongly put—and there again—
A fault to pardon in the drawing's lines,
Its body, so to speak! its soul is right,
He means right—that, a child may understand.
Still, what an arm! and I could alter it.
But all the play, the insight and the stretch—
Out of me! out of me! And wherefore out?
Had you enjoined them on me, given me soul,
We might have risen to Rafael, I and you.
Nay, Love, you did give all I asked, I think—
More than I merit, yes, by many times.
But had you—oh, with the same perfect brow,
And perfect eyes, and more than perfect mouth,
And the low voice my soul hears, as a bird
The fowler's pipe, and follows to the snare—
Had you, with these the same, but brought a mind!
Some women do so. Had the mouth there urged
“God and the glory! never care for gain.
The present by the future, what is that?
Live for fame, side by side with Angelo—

Rafael is waiting. Up to God all three ! ”
I might have done it for you. So it seems—
Perhaps not. All is as God over-rules.
Beside, incentives come from the soul’s self ;
The rest avail not. Why do I need you ?
What wife had Rafael, or has Angelo ?
In this world, who can do a thing, will not—
And who would do it, cannot, I perceive :
Yet the will’s somewhat—somewhat, too, the power—
And thus we half-men struggle. At the end,
God, I conclude, compensates, punishes.
’Tis safer for me, if the award be strict,
That I am something underrated here,
Poor this long while, despised, to speak the truth.
I dared not, do you know, leave home all day,
For fear of chancing on the Paris lords.
The best is when they pass and look aside ;
But they speak sometimes ; I must bear it all.
Well may they speak ! That Francis, that first time,
And that long festal year at Fontainebleau !

I surely then could sometimes leave the ground,
Put on the glory, Rafael's daily wear,
In that humane great monarch's golden look,—
One finger in his beard or twisted curl
Over his mouth's good mark that made the smile,
One arm about my shoulder, round my neck,
The jingle of his gold chain in my ear,
You painting proudly with his breath on me,
All his court round him, seeing with his eyes,
Such frank French eyes, and such a fire of souls
Profuse, my hand kept plying by those hearts,—
And, best of all, this, this, this face beyond,
This in the back-ground, waiting on my work,
To crown the issue with a last reward !
A good time, was it not, my kingly days ?
And had you not grown restless—but I know—
'Tis done and past ; 'twas right, my instinct said ;
Too live the life grew, golden and not grey—
And I'm the weak-eyed bat no sun should tempt
Out of the grange whose four walls make his world.

How could it end in any other way ?

You called me, and I came home to your heart.

The triumph was to have ended there—then if

I reached it ere the triumph, what is lost ?

Let my hands frame your face in your hair's gold,

You beautiful Lucrezia that are mine !

“Rafael did this, Andrea painted that—

The Roman's is the better when you pray,

But still the other's Virgin was his wife —”

Men will excuse me. I am glad to judge

Both pictures in your presence ; clearer grows

My better fortune, I resolve to think.

For, do you know, Lucrezia, as God lives,

Said one day Angelo, his very self,

To Rafael . . . I have known it all these years . . .

(When the young man was flaming out his thoughts

Upon a palace-wall for Rome to see,

Too lifted up in heart because of it)

“Friend, there's a certain sorry little scrub

Goes up and down our Florence, none cares how,

Who, were he set to plan and execute
As you are pricked on by your popes and kings,
Would bring the sweat into that brow of yours ! ”
To Rafael’s !—And indeed the arm is wrong.
I hardly dare—yet, only you to see,
Give the chalk here—quick, thus the line should go !
Ay, but the soul ! he’s Rafael ! rub it out !
Still, all I care for, if he spoke the truth,
(What he ? why, who but Michael Angelo ?
Do you forget already words like those ?)
If really there was such a chance, so lost,
Is, whether you’re—not grateful—but more pleased.
Well, let me think so. And you smile indeed !
This hour has been an hour ! Another smile ?
If you would sit thus by me every night
I should work better, do you comprehend ?
I mean that I should earn more, give you more.
See, it is settled dusk now ; there’s a star ;
Morello’s gone, the watch-lights shew the wall,
The cue-owls speak the name we call them by.

Come from the window, Love,—come in, at last,
Inside the melancholy little house
We built to be so gay with. God is just.
King Francis may forgive me. Oft at nights
When I look up from painting, eyes tired out,
The walls become illumined, brick from brick
Distinct, instead of mortar fierce bright gold,
That gold of his I did cement them with!
Let us but love each other. Must you go?
That Cousin here again? he waits outside?
Must see you—you, and not with me? Those loans!
More gaming debts to pay? you smiled for that?
Well, let smiles buy me! have you more to spend?
While hand and eye and something of a heart
Are left me, work's my ware, and what's it worth?
I'll pay my fancy. Only let me sit
The grey remainder of the evening out,
Idle, you call it, and muse perfectly
How I could paint were I but back in France,
One picture, just one more—the Virgin's face,

Not your's this time ! I want you at my side
To hear them—that is, Michael Angelo—
Judge all I do and tell you of its worth.
Will you ? To-morrow, satisfy your friend.
I take the subjects for his corridor,
Finish the portrait out of hand—there, there,
And throw him in another thing or two
If he demurs ; the whole should prove enough
To pay for this same Cousin's freak. Beside,
What's better and what's all I care about,
Get you the thirteen scudi for the ruff.
Love, does that please you ? Ah, but what does he,
The Cousin ! what does he to please you more ?

I am grown peaceful as old age to-night.
I regret little, I would change still less.
Since there my past life lies, why alter it ?
The very wrong to Francis ! it is true
I took his coin, was tempted and complied,
And built this house and sinned, and all is said.

My father and my mother died of want.
Well, had I riches of my own? you see
How one gets rich! Let each one bear his lot.
They were born poor, lived poor, and poor they died :
And I have laboured somewhat in my time
And not been paid profusely. Some good son
Paint my two hundred pictures—let him try!
No doubt, there's something strikes a balance. Yes,
You loved me quite enough, it seems to-night.
This must suffice me here. What would one have?
In heaven, perhaps, new chances, one more chance—
Four great walls in the New Jerusalem
Meted on each side by the angel's reed,
For Leonard, Rafael, Angelo and me
To cover—the three first without a wife,
While I have mine! So—still they overcome
Because there's still Lucrezia,—as I choose.

Again the Cousin's whistle! Go, my Love.

BEFORE.



1.

LET them fight it out, friend! things have gone too
far.

God must judge the couple! leave them as they are
—Whichever one's the guiltless, to his glory,
And whichever one the guilt's with, to my story.

2.

Why, you would not bid men, sunk in such a slough,
Strike no arm out further, stick and stink as now,
Leaving right and wrong to settle the embroilment,
Heaven with snaky Hell, in torture and entoilment?

3.

Which of them's the culprit, how must he conceive
God's the queen he caps to, laughing in his sleeve!
'Tis but decent to profess oneself beneath her.
Still, one must not be too much in earnest either.

4.

Better sin the whole sin, sure that God observes,
Then go live his life out! life will try his nerves,
When the sky which noticed all, makes no disclosure,
And the earth keeps up her terrible composure.

5.

Let him pace at pleasure, past the walls of rose,
Pluck their fruits when grape-trees graze him as he
goes.
For he 'gins to guess the purpose of the garden,
With the sly mute thing beside there for a warden.

6.

What's the leopard-dog-thing, constant to his side,
A leer and lie in every eye on its obsequious hide?
When will come an end of all the mock obeisance,
And the price appear that pays for the misfeasance?

7.

So much for the culprit. Who's the martyred man?
Let him bear one stroke more, for be sure he can.
He that strove thus evil's lump with good to leaven,
Let him give his blood at last and get his heaven.

8.

All or nothing, stake it! trusts he God or no?
Thus far and no farther? farther? be it so.
Now, enough of your chicane of prudent pauses,
Sage provisos, sub-intents, and saving-clauses.

9.

Ah, "forgive" you bid him? While God's champion
lives,
Wrong shall be resisted: dead, why he forgives.
But you must not end my friend ere you begin him;
Evil stands not crowned on earth, while breath is in
him.

10.

Once more—Will the wronger, at this last of all,
Dare to say "I did wrong," rising in his fall?
No?—Let go, then—both the fighters to their places—
While I count three, step you back as many paces.

AFTER.



TAKE the cloak from his face, and at first
Let the corpse do its worst.

How he lies in his rights of a man !
Death has done all death can.
And absorbed in the new life he leads,
He recks not, he heeds
Nor his wrong nor my vengeance—both strike
On his senses alike,
And are lost in the solemn and strange
Surprise of the change.

Ha, what avails death to erase

His offence, my disgrace ?

I would we were boys as of old

In the field, by the fold—

His outrage, God's patience, man's scorn

Were so easily borne.

I stand here now, he lies in his place—

Cover the face.

IN THREE DAYS.



1.

So, I shall see her in three days
And just one night, but nights are short,
Then two long hours, and that is morn.
See how I come, unchanged, unworn—
Feel, where my life broke off from thine,
How fresh the splinters keep and fine,—
Only a touch and we combine!

2.

Too long, this time of year, the days!
But nights—at least the nights are short.

As night shows where her one moon is,
A hand's-breadth of pure light and bliss,
So, life's night gives my lady birth
And my eyes hold her ! what is worth
The rest of heaven, the rest of earth ?

3.

O loaded curls, release your store
Of warmth and scent as once before
The tingling hair did, lights and darks
Out-breaking into fairy sparks
When under curl and curl I pried
After the warmth and scent inside
Thro' lights and darks how manifold—
The dark inspired, the light controlled !
As early Art embrowned the gold.

4.

What great fear—should one say, “ Three days
That change the world, might change as well

Your fortune ; and if joy delays,
Be happy that no worse befell.”
What small fear—if another says,
“ Three days and one short night beside
May throw no shadow on your ways ;
But years must teem with change untried,
With chance not easily defied,
With an end somewhere undescried.”
No fear !—or if a fear be born
This minute, it dies out in scorn.
Fear ? I shall see her in three days
And one night, now the nights are short,
Then just two hours, and that is morn.

IN A YEAR.



1.

NEVER any more
While I live,
Need I hope to see his face
As before.
Once his love grown chill,
Mine may strive—
Bitterly we re-embrace,
Single still.

2.

Was it something said,
 Something done,
Vexed him ? was it touch of hand,
 Turn of head ?
Strange ! that very way
 Love begun.
I as little understand
 Love's decay.

3.

When I sewed or drew,
 I recall
How he looked as if I sang,
 —Sweetly too.
If I spoke a word,
 First of all
Up his cheek the color sprang,
 Then he heard.

4.

Sitting by my side,
At my feet,
So he breathed the air I breathed,
Satisfied !
I, too, at love's brim
Touched the sweet :
I would die if death bequeathed
Sweet to him.

5.

"Speak, I love thee best !"
He exclaimed.
"Let thy love my own foretell,—"
I confessed :
"Clasp my heart on thine
Now unblamed,
Since upon thy soul as well
Hangeth mine !"

6.

Was it wrong to own,
Being truth ?
Why should all the giving prove
His alone ?
I had wealth and ease,
Beauty, youth—
Since my lover gave me love,
I gave these.

7.

That was all I meant,
—To be just,
And the passion I had raised
To content.
Since he chose to change
Gold for dust,
If I gave him what he praised
Was it strange ?

8.

Would he loved me yet,
On and on,
While I found some way undreamed
—Paid my debt!
Gave more life and more,
Till, all gone,
He should smile “She never seemed
Mine before.

9.

“What—she felt the while,
Must I think?
Love’s so different with us men,”
He should smile.
“Dying for my sake—
White and pink!
Can’t we touch these bubbles then
But they break?”

10.

Dear, the pang is brief.

Do thy part,

Have thy pleasure. How perplex

Grows belief!

Well, this cold clay clod

Was man's heart.

Crumble it—and what comes next?

Is it God?

OLD PICTURES IN FLORENCE.



1.

THE morn when first it thunders in March,
The eel in the pond gives a leap, they say.
As I leaned and looked over the aloed arch
Of the villa-gate, this warm March day,
No flash snapt, no dumb thunder rolled
In the valley beneath, where, white and wide,
Washed by the morning's water-gold,
Florence lay out on the mountain-side.

2.

River and bridge and street and square
 Lay mine, as much at my beck and call,
 Through the live translucent bath of air,
 As the sights in a magic crystal ball.
 And of all I saw and of all I praised,
 The most to praise and the best to see,
 Was the startling bell-tower Giotto raised :
 But why did it more than startle me ?

3.

Giotto, how, with that soul of yours,
 Could you play me false who loved you so ?
 Some slights if a certain heart endures
 It feels, I would have your fellows know !
 'Faith—I perceive not why I should care
 To break a silence that suits them best,
 But the thing grows somewhat hard to bear
 When I find a Giotto join the rest.

4.

On the arch where olives overhead
Print the blue sky with twig and leaf,
(That sharp-curved leaf they never shed)
'Twixt the aloes I used to lean in chief,
And mark through the winter afternoons,
By a gift God grants me now and then,
In the mild decline of those suns like moons,
Who walked in Florence, besides her men.

5.

They might chirp and chaffer, come and go
For pleasure or profit, her men alive—
My business was hardly with them, I trow,
But with empty cells of the human hive ;
—With the chapter-room, the cloister-porch,
The church's apsis, aisle or nave,
Its crypt, one fingers along with a torch—
Its face, set full for the sun to shave.

6.

Wherever a fresco peels and drops,
Wherever an outline weakens and wanes
Till the latest life in the painting stops,
Stands One whom each fainter pulse-tick pains !
One, wishful each scrap should clutch its brick,
Each tinge not wholly escape the plaster,
—A lion who dies of an ass's kick,
The wronged great soul of an ancient Master.

7.

For oh, this world and the wrong it does !
They are safe in heaven with their backs to it,
The Michaels and Rafaels, you hum and buzz
Round the works of, you of the little wit !
Do their eyes contract to the earth's old scope,
Now that they see God face to face,
And have all attained to be poets, I hope ?
'Tis their holiday now, in any case.

8.

Much they reckon of your praise and you !

But the wronged great souls—can they be quit
Of a world where all their work is to do,
Where you style them, you of the little wit,
Old Master this and Early the other,
Not dreaming that Old and New are fellows,
That a younger succeeds to an elder brother,
Da Vincis derive in good time from Dellos.

9.

And here where your praise would yield returns
And a handsome word or two give help,
Here, after your kind, the mastiff girns
And the puppy pack of poodles yelp.
What, not a word for Stefano there
—Of brow once prominent and starry,
Called Nature's ape and the world's despair
For his peerless painting (see Vasari) ?

10.

There he stands now. Study, my friends,
 What a man's work comes to ! so he plans it,
 Performs it, perfects it, makes amends
 For the toiling and moiling, and there's its transit !
 Happier the thrifty blind-folk labour,
 With upturned eye while the hand is busy,
 Not sidling a glance at the coin of their neighbour !
 'Tis looking downward makes one dizzy.

11.

If you knew their work you would deal your dole.
 May I take upon me to instruct you ?
 When Greek Art ran and reached the goal,
 Thus much had the world to boast *in fructu*—
 The truth of Man, as by God first spoken,
 Which the actual generations garble,
 Was re-uttered,—and Soul (which Limbs betoken)
 And Limbs (Soul informs) were made new in marble.

12.

So you saw yourself as you wished you were,
As you might have been, as you cannot be ;
And bringing your own shortcomings there,
You grew content in your poor degree
With your little power, by those statues' godhead,
And your little scope, by their eyes' full sway,
And your little grace, by their grace embodied,
And your little date, by their forms that stay.

13.

You would fain be kinglier, say than I am ?
Even so, you will not sit like Theseus.
You'd fain be a model ? the Son of Priam
Has yet the advantage in arms' and knees' use.
You're wroth—can you slay your snake like Apollo ?
You're grieved—still Niobe's the grander !
You live—there's the Racers' frieze to follow—
You die—there's the dying Alexander.

14.

So, testing your weakness by their strength,
Your meagre charms by their rounded beauty,
Measured by Art in your breadth and length,
You learn—to submit is the worsted's duty.
—When I say “you ” 'tis the common soul,
The collective, I mean—the race of Man
That receives life in parts to live in a whole,
And grow here according to God's own plan.

15.

Growth came when, looking your last on them all,
You turned your eyes inwardly one fine day
And cried with a start—What if we so small
Are greater, ay, greater the while than they !
Are they perfect of lineament, perfect of stature ?
In both, of such lower types are we
Precisely because of our wider nature ;
For time, theirs—ours, for eternity.

16.

To-day's brief passion limits their range,
It seethes with the morrow for us and more.
They are perfect—how else ? they shall never change :
We are faulty—why not ? we have time in store.
The Artificer's hand is not arrested
With us—we are rough-hewn, no-wise polished :
They stand for our copy, and, once invested
With all they can teach, we shall see them abolished.

17.

'Tis a life-long toil till our lump be leaven—
The better ! what's come to perfection perishes.
Things learned on earth, we shall practise in heaven.
Works done least rapidly, Art most cherishes.
Thyself shall afford the example, Giotto !
Thy one work, not to decrease or diminish,
Done at a stroke, was just (was it not ?) " O ! "
Thy great Campanile is still to finish.

13.

Is it true, we are now, and shall be hereafter,
 And what—is depending on life's one minute?
 Hails heavenly cheer or infernal laughter
 Our first step out of the gulf or in it?
 And Man, this step within his endeavour,
 His face, have no more play and action
 Than joy which is crystallized for ever,
 Or grief, an eternal petrification!

19.

On which I conclude, that the early painters,
 To cries of "Greek Art and what more wish you?"—
 Replied, "Become now self-acquainters,
 And paint man, man,—whatever the issue!
 Make the hopes shine through the flesh they fray,
 New fears aggrandise the rags and tatters.
 So bring the invisible full into play,
 Let the visible go to the dogs—what matters?"

20.

Give these, I say, full honour and glory
For daring so much, before they well did it.
The first of the new, in our race's story,
Beats the last of the old, 'tis no idle quiddit.
The worthies began a revolution
Which if on the earth we intend to acknowledge
Honour them now—(ends my allocution)
Nor confer our degree when the folks leave college.

21.

There's a fancy some lean to and others hate—
That, when this life is ended, begins
New work for the soul in another state,
Where it strives and gets weary, loses and wins—
Where the strong and the weak, this world's congeries,
Repeat in large what they practised in small,
Through life after life in unlimited series ;
Only the scale's to be changed, that's all.

22.

Yet I hardly know. When a soul has seen

By the means of Evil that Good is best, [serene,—
And through earth and its noise, what is heaven's

When its faith in the same has stood the test—
Why, the child grown man, you burn the rod,
The uses of labour are surely done.

There remaineth a rest for the people of God,
And I have had troubles enough for one.

23.

But at any rate I have loved the season

Of Art's spring-birth so dim and dewy,
My sculptor is Nicolo the Pisan;
My painter—who but Cimabue?

Nor ever was man of them all indeed,

From these to Ghiberti and Ghirlandajo,
Could say that he missed my critic-meed.

So now to my special grievance—heigh ho!

24.

Their ghosts now stand, as I said before,
Watching each fresco flaked and rasped,
Blocked up, knocked out, or whitewashed o'er
—No getting again what the church has grasped!
The works on the wall must take their chance,
“Works never conceded to England’s thick clime!”
(I hope they prefer their inheritance
Of a bucketful of Italian quick-lime.)

25.

When they go at length, with such a shaking
Of heads o'er the old delusions, sadly
Each master his way through the black streets taking,
Where many a lost work breathes though badly—
Why don't they bethink them of who has merited?
Why not reveal, while their pictures dree
Such doom, that a captive's to be out-ferreted?
Why do they never remember me?

26.

Not that I expect the great Bigordi
Nor Sandro to hear me, chivalric, bellicose ;
Nor wronged Lippino—and not a word I
Say of a scrap of Fra Angelico's.
But are you too fine, Taddeo Gaddi,
To grant me a taste of your intonaco—
Some Jerome that seeks the heaven with a sad eye ?
No churlish saint, Lorenzo Monaco ?

27.

Could not the ghost with the close red cap,
My Pollajolo, the twice a craftsman,
Save me a sample, give me the hap
Of a muscular Christ that shows the draughtsman ?
No Virgin by him, the somewhat petty,
Of finical touch and tempera crumbly—
Could not Alesso Baldovinetti
Contribute so much, I ask him humbly ?

28.

Margheritone of Arezzo,

With the grave-clothes garb and swaddling barret,
(Why purse up mouth and beak in a pet so,
You bald, saturnine, poll-clawed parrot ?)

No poor glimmering Crucifixion,

Where in the foreground kneels the donor ?
If such remain, as is my conviction,
The hoarding does you but little honour.

29.

They pass : for them the panels may thrill,

The tempera grow alive and tinglish—
Rot or are left to the mercies still

Of dealers and stealers, Jews and the English !

Seeing mere money's worth in their prize,

Who sell it to some one calm as Zeno
At naked Art, and in ecstacies

Before some clay-cold, vile Carlino !

30.

No matter for these ! But Giotto, you,
Have you allowed, as the town-tongues babble it,
Never ! it shall not be counted true—
That a certain precious little tablet
Which Buonarroti eyed like a lover,—
Buried so long in oblivion's womb,
Was left for another than I to discover,—
Turns up at last, and to whom ?—to whom ?

31.

I, that have haunted the dim San Spirito,
(Or was it rather the Ognissanti ?)
Stood on the altar-steps, patient and weary too !
Nay, I shall have it yet, *detur amanti* !
My Koh-i-noor—or (if that's a platitude)
Jewel of Giamschid, the Persian Sofi's eye !
So, in anticipative gratitude,
What if I take up my hope and prophesy ?

32.

When the hour is ripe, and a certain dotard
Pitched, no parcel that needs invoicing,
To the worse side of the Mont St. Gothard,
Have, to begin by way of rejoicing,
None of that shooting the sky (blank cartridge),
No civic guards, all plumes and lacquer,
Hunting Radetzky's soul like a partridge
Over Morello with squib and cracker.

33.

We'll shoot this time better game and bag 'em hot—
No display at the stone of Dante,
But a kind of Witan-agemot
("Casa Guidi," quod videas ante)
To ponder Freedom restored to Florence,
How Art may return that departed with her.
Go, hated house, go each trace of the Lorraine's!
And bring us the days of Orgagna hither.

34.

How we shall prologuise, how we shall perorate,
Say fit things upon art and history—
Set truth at blood-heat and the false at a zero rate,
Make of the want of the age no mystery!
Contrast the fructuous and sterile eras,
Show, monarchy its uncouth cub licks
Out of the bear's shape to the chimæra's—
Pure Art's birth being still the republic's!

35.

Then one shall propose (in a speech, curt Tuscan,
Sober, expurgate, spare of an "*issimo*,")
Ending our half-told tale of Cambuscan,
Turning the Bell-tower's altaltissimo.
And fine as the beak of a young beccaccia
The Campanile, the Duomo's fit ally,
Soars up in gold its full fifty braccia,
Completing Florence, as Florence, Italy.

36.

Shall I be alive that morning the scaffold
Is broken away, and the long-pent fire
Like the golden hope of the world unbaffled
Springs from its sleep, and up goes the spire—
As, "God and the People" plain for its motto,
Thence the new tricolor flaps at the sky?
Foreseeing the day that vindicates Giotto
And Florence together, the first am I!

IN A BALCONY.

FIRST PART.

CONSTANCE *and* NORBERT.

NORBERT.

Now.

CONSTANCE.

Not now.

NORBERT.

Give me them again, those hands—
Put them upon my forehead, how it throbs!
Press them before my eyes, the fire comes through.
You cruellest, you dearest in the world,

Let me! the Queen must grant whate'er I ask—
How can I gain you and not ask the Queen?
There she stays waiting for me, here stand you.
Some time or other this was to be asked,
Now is the one time—what I ask, I gain—
Let me ask now, Love!

CONSTANCE.

Do, and ruin us.

NORBERT.

Let it be now, Love! All my soul breaks forth.
How I do love you! give my love its way!
A man can have but one life and one death,
One heaven, one hell. Let me fulfil my fate—
Grant me my heaven now. Let me know you
mine,
Prove you mine, write my name upon your brow,
Hold you and have you, and then die away
If God please, with completion in my soul.

CONSTANCE.

I am not yours then ? how content this man ?
I am not his, who change into himself,
Have passed into his heart and beat its beats,
Who give my hands to him, my eyes, my hair,
Give all that was of me away to him
So well, that now, my spirit turned his own,
Takes part with him against the woman here,
Bids him not stumble at so mere a straw
As caring that the world be cognisant
How he loves her and how she worships him.
You have this woman, not as yet that world.
Go on, I bid, nor stop to care for me
By saving what I cease to care about,
The courtly name and pride of circumstance—
The name you'll pick up and be cumbered with
Just for the poor parade's sake, nothing more ;
Just that the world may slip from under you—
Just that the world may cry " So much for him—

The man predestined to the heap of crowns !
There goes his chance of winning one, at least."

NORBERT.

The world !

CONSTANCE.

You love it. Love me quite as well,
And see if I shall pray for this in vain !
Why must you ponder what it knows or thinks ?

NORBERT.

You pray for—what, in vain ?

CONSTANCE.

Oh my heart's heart,
How I do love you, Norbert !—that is right !
But listen, or I take my hands away.
You say, "let it be now"—you would go now
And tell the Queen, perhaps six steps from us,
You love me—so you do, thank God !

NORBERT.

Thank God!

CONSTANCE.

Yes, Norbert,—but you fain would tell your love,
And, what succeeds the telling, ask of her
My hand. Now take this rose and look at it,
Listening to me. You are the minister,
The Queen's first favourite, nor without a cause.
To-night completes your wonderful year's-work
(This palace-feast is held to celebrate)
Made memorable by her life's success,
That junction of two crowns on her sole head
Her house had only dreamed of anciently.
That this mere dream is grown a stable truth
To-night's feast makes authentic. Whose the praise?
Whose genius, patience, energy, achieved
What turned the many heads and broke the hearts?
You are the fate—your minute's in the heaven.
Next comes the Queen's turn. Name your own reward!

With leave to clench the past, chain the to-come,
Put out an arm and touch and take the sun
And fix it ever full-faced on your earth,
Possess yourself supremely of her life,
You choose the single thing she will not grant—
The very declaration of which choice
Will turn the scale and neutralise your work.
At best she will forgive you, if she can.
You think I'll let you choose—her cousin's hand ?

NORBERT.

Wait. First, do you retain your old belief
The Queen is generous,—nay, is just ?

CONSTANCE.

There, there !

So men make women love them, while they know
No more of women's hearts than . . . look you here,
You that are just and generous beside,
Make it your own case. For example now,

I'll say—I let you kiss me and hold my hands—
Why? do you know why? I'll instruct you, then—
The kiss, because you have a name at court,
This hand and this, that you may shut in each
A jewel, if you please to pick up such.
That's horrible! Apply it to the Queen—
Suppose, I am the Queen to whom you speak.
“I was a nameless man: you needed me:
Why did I proffer you my aid? there stood
A certain pretty Cousin at your side.
Why did I make such common cause with you?
Access to her had not been easy else.
You give my labours here abundant praise:
'Faith, labour, while she overlooked, grew play.
How shall your gratitude discharge itself?
Give me her hand!”

NORBERT.

And still I urge the same.
Is the Queen just? just—generous or no!

CONSTANCE.

Yes, just. You love a rose—no harm in that—
But was it for the rose's sake or mine
You put it in your bosom? mine, you said—
Then mine you still must say or else be false.
You told the Queen you served her for herself:
If so, to serve her was to serve yourself
She thinks, for all your unbelieving face!
I know her. In the hall, six steps from us,
One sees the twenty pictures—there's a life
Better than life—and yet no life at all;
Conceive her born in such a magic dome,
Pictures all round her! why, she sees the world,
Can recognise its given things and facts,
The fight of giants or the feast of gods,
Sages in senate, beauties at the bath,
Chaces and battles, the whole earth's display,
Landscape and sea-piece, down to flowers and fruit—
And who shall question that she knows them all

In better semblance than the things outside ?
Yet bring into the silent gallery
Some live thing to contrast in breath and blood,
Some lion, with the painted lion there—
You think she'll understand composedly ?
—Say, “ that's his fellow in the hunting-piece
Yonder, I've turned to praise a hundred times ? ”
Not so. Her knowledge of our actual earth,
Its hopes and fears, concerns and sympathies,
Must be too far, too mediate, too unreal.
The real exists for us outside, not her—
How should it, with that life in these four walls,
That father and that mother, first to last
No father and no mother—friends, a heap,
Lovers, no lack—a husband in due time,
And everyone of them alike a lie !
Things painted by a Rubens out of nought
Into what kindness, friendship, love should be ;
All better, all more grandiose than life,
Only no life ; mere cloth and surface-paint

You feel while you admire. How should she feel?
And now that she has stood thus fifty years
The sole spectator in that gallery,
You think to bring this warm real struggling love
In to her of a sudden, and suppose
She'll keep her state untroubled? Here's the truth—
She'll apprehend its value at a glance,
Prefer it to the pictured loyalty!
You only have to say "so men are made,
For this they act, the thing has many names
But this the right one—and now, Queen, be just!"
And life slips back—you lose her at the word—
You do not even for amends gain me.
He will not understand! oh, Norbert, Norbert,
Do you not understand?

NORBERT.

The Queen's the Queen,
I am myself—no picture, but alive
In every nerve and every muscle, here

At the palace-window or in the people's street,
As she in the gallery where the pictures glow.
The good of life is precious to us both.
She cannot love—what do I want with rule ?
When first I saw your face a year ago
I knew my life's good—my soul heard one voice
“The woman yonder, there's no use of life
But just to obtain her ! heap earth's woes in one
And bear them—make a pile of all earth's joys
And spurn them, as they help or help not here ;
Only, obtain her !”—How was it to be ?
I found she was the cousin of the Queen ;
I must then serve the Queen to get to her—
No other way. Suppose there had been one,
And I by saying prayers to some white star
With promise of my body and my soul
Might gain you,—should I pray the star or no ?
Instead, there was the Queen to serve ! I served,
And did what other servants failed to do.
Neither she sought nor I declared my end.

Her good is hers, my recompense be mine,
And let me name you as that recompense.
She dreamed that such a thing could never be ?
Let her wake now. She thinks there was some
cause—

The love of power, of fame, pure loyalty ?
—Perhaps she fancies men wear out their lives
Chasing such shades. Then I've a fancy too.
I worked because I want you with my soul—
I therefore ask your hand. Let it be now.

CONSTANCE.

Had I not loved you from the very first,
Were I not yours, could we not steal out thus
So wickedly, so wildly, and so well,
You might be thus impatient. What's conceived
Of us without here, by the folks within ?
Where are you now ? immersed in cares of state—
Where am I now ?—intent on festal robes—
We two, embracing under death's spread hand !

What was this thought for, what this scruple of
yours

Which broke the council up, to bring about

One minute's meeting in the corridor ?

And then the sudden sleights, long secresies,

The plots inscrutable, deep telegraphs,

Long-planned chance-meetings, hazards of a look,

"Does she know? does she not know? saved or lost?"

A year of this compression's ecstasy

All goes for nothing? you would give this up

For the old way, the open way, the world's,

His way who beats, and his who sells his wife?

What tempts you? their notorious happiness,

That you're ashamed of ours? The best you'll get

Will be, the Queen grants all that you require,

Concedes the cousin, and gets rid of you

And her at once, and gives us ample leave

To live as our five hundred happy friends.

The world will show us with officious hand

Our chamber-entry and stand sentinel,

When we so oft have stolen across her traps !
Get the world's warrant, ring the falcon's foot,
And make it duty to be bold and swift,
When long ago 'twas nature. Have it so !
He never hawked by rights till flung from fist ?
Oh, the man's thought !—no woman's such a fool.

NORBERT.

Yes, the man's thought and my thought, which is
more—

One made to love you, let the world take note.
Have I done worthy work ? be love's the praise,
Though hampered by restrictions, barred against
By set forms, blinded by forced secresies.
Set free my love, and see what love will do
Shown in my life—what work will spring from that !
The world is used to have its business done
On other grounds, find great effects produced
For power's sake, fame's sake, motives you have
named.

So good. But let my low ground shame their high.
Truth is the strong thing. Let man's life be true!
And love's the truth of mine. Time prove the rest!
I choose to have you stamped all over me,
Your name upon my forehead and my breast,
You, from the sword's blade to the ribbon's edge,
That men may see, all over, you in me—
That pale loves may die out of their pretence
In face of mine, shames thrown on love fall off—
Permit this, Constance! Love has been so long
Subdued in me, eating me through and through,
That now it's all of me and must have way.
Think of my work, that chaos of intrigues,
Those hopes and fears, surprises and delays,
That long endeavour, earnest, patient, slow,
Trembling at last to its assured result—
Then think of this revulsion. I resume
Life, after death, (it is no less than life
After such long unlovely labouring days)
And liberate to beauty life's great need

Of the beautiful, which, while it prompted work,
Suppress itself erewhile. This eve's the time—
This eve intense with yon first trembling star
We seem to pant and reach ; scarce aught between
The earth that rises and the heaven that bends—
All nature self-abandoned—every tree
Flung as it will, pursuing its own thoughts
And fixed so, every flower and every weed,
No pride, no shame, no victory, no defeat :
All under God, each measured by itself !
These statues round us, each abrupt, distinct,
The strong in strength, the weak in weakness fixed,
The Muse for ever wedded to her lyre,
The Nymph to her fawn, the Silence to her rose,
And God's approval on his universe !
Let us do so—aspire to live as these
In harmony with truth, ourselves being true.
Take the first way, and let the second come.
My first is to possess myself of you ;
The music sets the march-step—forward then !

And there's the Queen, I go to claim you of,
The world to witness, wonder and applaud.
Our flower of life breaks open. No delay !

CONSTANCE.

And so shall we be ruined, both of us.
Norbert, I know her to the skin and bone—
You do not know her, were not born to it,
To feel what she can see or cannot see.
Love, she is generous,—ay, despite your smile,
Generous as you are. For, in that thin frame
Pain-twisted, punctured through and through with
cares,
There lived a lavish soul until it starved
Debarred all healthy food. Look to the soul—
Pity that, stoop to that, ere you begin
(The true man's way) on justice and your rights,
Exactions and acquittance of the past.
Begin so—see what justice she will deal !
We women hate a debt as men a gift.

Suppose her some poor keeper of a school
Whose business is to sit thro' summer-months
And dole out children's leave to go and play,
Herself superior to such lightness—she
In the arm-chair's state and pædagogic pomp,
To the life, the laughter, sun and youth outside—
We wonder such an one looks black on us ?
I do not bid you wake her tenderness,
—That were vain truly—none is left to wake—
But, let her think her justice is engaged
To take the shape of tenderness, and mark
If she'll not coldly do its warmest deed !
Does she love me, I ask you ? not a whit.
Yet, thinking that her justice was engaged
To help a kinswoman, she took me up—
Did more on that bare ground than other loves
Would do on greater argument. For me,
I have no equivalent of that cold kind
To pay her with ; my love alone to give
If I give anything. I give her love.

I feel I ought to help her, and I will.
So for her sake, as yours, I tell you twice
That women hate a debt as men a gift.
If I were you, I could obtain this grace—
Would lay the whole I did to love's account,
Nor yet be very false as courtiers go—
Declare that my success was recompense ;
It would be so, in fact : what were it else ?
And then, once loosed her generosity
As you will mark it—then,—were I but you
To turn it, let it seem to move itself,
And make it give the thing I really take,
Accepting so, in the poor cousin's hand,
All value as the next thing to the queen—
Since none loves her directly, none dares that !
A shadow of a thing, a name's mere echo
Suffices those who miss the name and thing ;
You pick up just a ribbon she has worn
To keep in proof how near her breath you came.
Say I'm so near I seem a piece of her—

Ask for me that way—(oh, you understand)
And find the same gift yielded with a grace,
Which if you make the least shew to extort
—You'll see! and when you have ruined both of us,
Disertate on the Queen's ingratitude!

NORBERT.

Then, if I turn it that way, you consent?
'Tis not my way; I have more hope in truth.
Still if you won't have truth—why, this indeed,
Is scarcely false, I'll so express the sense.
Will you remain here?

CONSTANCE.

O best heart of mine,
How I have loved you! then, you take my way?
Are mine as you have been her minister,
Work out my thought, give it effect for me,
Paint plain my poor conceit and make it serve?
I owe that withered woman everything—

Life, fortune, you, remember! Take my part—
Help me to pay her! Stand upon your rights?
You, with my rose, my hands, my heart on you?
Your rights are mine—you have no rights but mine.

NORBERT.

Remain here. How you know me!

CONSTANCE.

Ah, but still——

*[He breaks from her: she remains. Dance-music
from within.]*

SECOND PART.

—•—

Enter the QUEEN.

QUEEN.

Constance!—She is here as he said. Speak! quick!
Is it so? is it true—or false? One word!

CONSTANCE.

True.

QUEEN.

Mercifullest Mother, thanks to thee!

CONSTANCE.

Madam!

QUEEN.

I love you, Constance, from my soul.

Now say once more, with any words you will,
'Tis true—all true—as true as that I speak.

CONSTANCE.

Why should you doubt it ?

QUEEN.

Ah, why doubt ? why doubt ?

Dear, make me see it. Do you see it so ?

None see themselves—another sees them best.

You say “why doubt it ?”—you see him and me.

It is because the Mother has such grace

That if we had but faith—wherein we fail—

Whate'er we yearn for would be granted us ;

Howbeit we let our whims prescribe despair,

Our very fancies thwart and cramp our will,

And so accepting life, abjure ourselves !

Constance, I had abjured the hope of love

And of being loved, as truly as yon palm

The hope of seeing Egypt from that turf.

CONSTANCE.

Heaven !

QUEEN.

But it was so, Constance, it was so.
Men say—or do men say it? fancies say—
“Stop here, your life is set, you are grown old.
Too late—no love for you, too late for love—
Leave love to girls. Be queen—let Constance love!”
One takes the hint—half meets it like a child,
Ashamed at any feelings that oppose.
“Oh, love, true, never think of love again!
I am a queen—I rule, not love, indeed.”
So it goes on ; so a face grows like this,
Hair like this hair, poor arms as lean as these,
Till,—nay, it does not end so, I thank God !

CONSTANCE.

I cannot understand——

QUEEN.

The happier you !

Constance, I know not how it is with men.

For women, (I am a woman now like you)

There is no good of life but love—but love !

What else looks good, is some shade flung from
love—

Love gilds it, gives it worth. Be warned by me,

Never you cheat yourself one instant. Love,

Give love, ask only love, and leave the rest !

O Constance, how I love you !

CONSTANCE.

I love you.

QUEEN.

I do believe that all is come through you.

I took you to my heart to keep it warm

When the last chance of love seemed dead in me ;

I thought your fresh youth warmed my withered
heart.

Oh, I am very old now, am I not ?

Not so ! it is true and it shall be true !

CONSTANCE.

Tell it me ! let me judge if true or false.

QUEEN.

Ah, but I fear you—you will look at me

And say “she’s old, she’s grown unlovely quite

Who ne’er was beauteous ! men want beauty still.”

Well, so I feared—the curse ! so I felt sure.

CONSTANCE.

Be calm. And now you feel not sure, you say ?

QUEEN.

Constance, he came, the coming was not strange—

Do not I stand and see men come and go ?

I turned a half-look from my pedestal
Where I grow marble—"one young man the more!
He will love some one,—that is nought to me—
What would he with my marble stateliness?"
Yet this seemed somewhat worse than heretofore;
The man more gracious, youthful, like a god,
And I still older, with less flesh to change—
We two those dear extremes that long to touch.
It seemed still harder when he first began
Absorbed to labour at the state-affairs
The old way for the old end, interest.
Oh, to live with a thousand beating hearts
Around you, swift eyes, serviceable hands,
Professing they've no care but for your cause,
Thought but to help you, love but for yourself,
And you the marble statue all the time
They praise and point at as preferred to life,
Yet leave for the first breathing woman's cheek,
First dancer's, gypsy's, or street baladine's!
Why, how I have ground my teeth to hear men's speech

Stifled for fear it should alarm my ear,
Their gait subdued lest step should startle me,
Their eyes declined, such queendom to respect,
Their hands alert, such treasure to preserve,
While not a man of these broke rank and spoke,
Or wrote me a vulgar letter all of love,
Or caught my hand and pressed it like a hand.
There have been moments, if the sentinel
Lowering his halbert to salute the queen,
Had flung it brutally and clasped my knees,
I would have stooped and kissed him with my soul.

CONSTANCE.

Who could have comprehended !

QUEEN.

Ay, who—who ?

Why, no one, Constance, but this one who did.
Not they, not you, not I. Even now perhaps
It comes too late—would you but tell the truth.

CONSTANCE.

I wait to tell it.

QUEEN.

Well, you see, he came,
Outfaced the others, did a work this year
Exceeds in value all was ever done
You know—it is not I who say it—all
Say it. And so (a second pang and worse)
I grew aware not only of what he did,
But why so wondrously. Oh, never work
Like his was done for work's ignoble sake—
It must have finer aims to spur it on!
I felt, I saw he loved—loved somebody.
And Constance, my dear Constance, do you know,
I did believe this while 'twas you he loved.

CONSTANCE.

Me, madam?

QUEEN.

It did seem to me your face
Met him where'er he looked: and whom but you
Was such a man to love? it seemed to me
You saw he loved you, and approved the love,
And that you both were in intelligence.
You could not loiter in the garden, step
Into this balcony, but I straight was stung
And forced to understand. It seemed so true,
So right, so beautiful, so like you both
That all this work should have been done by him
Not for the vulgar hope of recompense,
But that at last—suppose some night like this—
Borne on to claim his due reward of me
He might say, "Give her hand and pay me so."
And I (O Constance, you shall love me now)
I thought, surmounting all the bitterness,
—"And he shall have it. I will make her blest,
My flower of youth, my woman's self that was,

My happiest woman's self that might have been !
These two shall have their joy and leave me here."
Yes—yes—

CONSTANCE.

Thanks !

QUEEN.

And the word was on my lips
When he burst in upon me. I looked to hear
A mere calm statement of his just desire
In payment of his labour. When, O Heaven,
How can I tell you ? cloud was on my eyes
And thunder in my ears at that first word
Which told 'twas love of me, of me, did all—
He loved me—from the first step to the last,
Loved me !

CONSTANCE.

You did not hear . . . you thought he spoke
Of love ? what if you should mistake ?

QUEEN.

No, no—

No mistake ! Ha, there shall be no mistake !
He had not dared to hint the love he felt—
You were my reflex—how I understood !
He said you were the ribbon I had worn,
He kissed my hand, he looked into my eyes,
And love, love was the end of every phrase.
Love is begun—this much is come to pass,
The rest is easy. Constance, I am yours—
I will learn, I will place my life on you,
But teach me how to keep what I have won.
Am I so old ? this hair was early grey ;
But joy ere now has brought hair brown again,
And joy will bring the cheek's red back, I feel.
I could sing once too ; that was in my youth.
Still, when men paint me, they declare me . . . yes,
Beautiful—for the last French painter did !
I know they flatter somewhat ; you are frank—

I trust you. How I loved you from the first !
Some queens would hardly seek a cousin out
And set her by their side to take the eye :
I must have felt that good would come from you.
I am not generous—like him—like you !
But he is not your lover after all—
It was not you he looked at. Saw you him ?
You have not been mistaking words or looks ?
He said you were the reflex of myself—
And yet he is not such a paragon
To you, to younger women who may choose
Among a thousand Norberts. Speak the truth !
You know you never named his name to me—
You know, I cannot give him up—ah God,
Not up now, even to you !

CONSTANCE.

Then calm yourself.

QUEEN.

See, I am old—look here, you happy girl,

I will not play the fool, deceive myself;
'Tis all gone—put your cheek beside my cheek—
Ah, what a contrast does the moon behold!
But then I set my life upon one chance,
The last chance and the best—am *I* not left,
My soul, myself? All women love great men
If young or old—it is in all the tales—
Young beauties love old poets who can love—
Why should not he the poems in my soul,
The love, the passionate faith, the sacrifice,
The constancy? I throw them at his feet.
Who cares to see the fountain's very shape
And whether it be a Triton's or a Nymph's
That pours the foam, makes rainbows all around?
You could not praise indeed the empty conch;
But I'll pour floods of love and hide myself.
How I will love him! cannot men love love?
Who was a queen and loved a poet once
Humpbacked, a dwarf? ah, women can do that!
Well, but men too! at least, they tell you so.

They love so many women in their youth,
And even in age they all love whom they please ;
And yet the best of them confide to friends
That 'tis not beauty makes the lasting love—
They spend a day with such and tire the next ;
They like soul,—well then, they like phantasy,
Novelty even. Let us confess the truth
Horrible though it be—that prejudice,
Prescription . . . Curses ! they will love a queen.
They will—they do. And will not, does not—he ?

CONSTANCE.

How can he ? You are wedded—'tis a name
We know, but still a bond. Your rank remains,
His rank remains. How can he, nobly souled
As you believe and I incline to think,
Aspire to be your favourite, shame and all ?

QUEEN.

Hear her ! there, there now—could she love like me ?

What did I say of smooth-cheeked youth and grace ?
See all it does or could do ! so, youth loves !
Oh, tell him, Constance, you could never do
What I will—you, it was not born in ! I
Will drive these difficulties far and fast
As yonder mists curdling before the moon.
I'll use my light too, gloriously retrieve
My youth from its enforced calamity,
Dissolve that hateful marriage, and be his,
His own in the eyes alike of God and man.

CONSTANCE.

You will do—dare do—Pause on what you say !

QUEEN.

Hear her ! I thank you, Sweet, for that surprise.
You have the fair face : for the soul, see mine !
I have the strong soul : let me teach you, here.
I think I have borne enough and long enough,
And patiently enough, the world remarks,

To have my own way now, unblamed by all.
It does so happen, I rejoice for it,
This most unhopèd-for issue cuts the knot.
There's not a better way of settling claims
Than this ; God sends the accident express ;
And were it for my subjects' good, no more,
'Twere best thus ordered. I am thankful now,
Mute, passive, acquiescent. I receive,
And bless God simply, or should almost fear
To walk so smoothly to my ends at last.
Why, how I baffle obstacles, spurn fate !
How strong I am ! could Norbert see me now !

CONSTANCE.

Let me consider. It is all too strange.

QUEEN.

You, Constance, learn of me ; do you, like me.
You are young, beautiful : my own, best girl,
You will have many lovers, and love one—

Light hair, not hair like Norbert's, to suit yours,
And taller than he is, for you are tall.

Love him like me ! give all away to him ;
Think never of yourself ; throw by your pride,
Hope, fear,—your own good as you saw it once,
And love him simply for his very self.

Remember, I (and what am I to you ?)
Would give up all for one, leave throne, lose life,
Do all but just unlove him ! he loves me.

CONSTANCE.

He shall.

QUEEN.

You, step inside my inmost heart.
Give me your own heart—let us have one heart—
I'll come to you for counsel ; “ This he says,
This he does, what should this amount to, pray ?
Beseech you, change it into current coin.
Is that worth kisses ? shall I please him there ? ”
And then we'll speak in turn of you—what else ?

Your love (according to your beauty's worth)
For you shall have some noble love, all gold—
Whom choose you? we will get him at your choice.
—Constance, I leave you. Just a minute since
I felt as I must die or be alone
Breathing my soul into an ear like yours.
Now, I would face the world with my new life,
With my new crown. I'll walk around the rooms,
And then come back and tell you how it feels.
How soon a smile of God can change the world!
How we are all made for happiness—how work
Grows play, adversity a winning fight!
True, I have lost so many years. What then?
Many remain—God has been very good.
You, stay here. 'Tis as different from dreams,—
From the mind's cold calm estimate of bliss,
As these stone statues from the flesh and blood.
The comfort thou hast caused mankind, God's moon!

[She goes out. Dance-music from within.]

PART THIRD.



NORBERT *enters.*

NORBERT.

Well ! we have but one minute and one word——

CONSTANCE.

I am yours, Norbert !

NORBERT.

Yes, mine.

CONSTANCE.

Not till now !

You were mine. Now I give myself to you.

NORBERT.

Constance !

CONSTANCE.

Your own ! I know the thriftier way
Of giving—haply, 'tis the wiser way.
Meaning to give a treasure, I might dole
Coin after coin out (each, as that were all,
With a new largess still at each despair)
And force you keep in sight the deed, reserve
Exhaustless till the end my part and yours,
My giving and your taking, both our joys
Dying together. Is it the wiser way ?
I choose the simpler ; I give all at once.
Know what you have to trust to, trade upon.
Use it, abuse it,—anything but say
Hereafter, “ Had I known she loved me so,
And what my means, I might have thriven with it.”
This is your means. I give you all myself.

NORBERT.

I take you and thank God.

CONSTANCE.

Look on through years !

We cannot kiss a second day like this,

Else were this earth, no earth.

NORBERT.

With this day's heat

We shall go on through years of cold.

CONSTANCE.

So best.

I try to see those years—I think I see.

You walk quick and new warmth comes ; you look
back

And lay all to the first glow—not sit down

For ever brooding on a day like this

While seeing the embers whiten and love die.

Yes, love lives best in its effect ; and mine,

Full in its own life, yearns to live in yours.

NORBERT.

Just so. I take and know you all at once.
Your soul is disengaged so easily,
Your face is there, I know you ; give me time,
Let me be proud and think you shall know me.
My soul is slower : in a life I roll
The minute out in which you condense yours—
The whole slow circle round you I must move,
To be just you. I look to a long life
To decompose this minute, prove its worth.
'Tis the sparks' long succession one by one
Shall show you in the end what fire was crammed
In that mere stone you struck : you could not know,
If it lay ever unproved in your sight,
As now my heart lies ? your own warmth would hide
Its coldness, were it cold.

CONSTANCE.

But how prove, how ?

NORBERT.

Prove in my life, you ask ?

CONSTANCE.

Quick, Norbert—how ?

NORBERT.

That's easy told. I count life just a stuff
To try the soul's strength on, educe the man.
Who keeps one end in view makes all things serve.
As with the body—he who hurls a lance
Or heaps up stone on stone, shews strength alike,
So I will seize and use all means to prove
And shew this soul of mine you crown as yours,
And justify us both.

CONSTANCE.

Could you write books,
Paint pictures ! one sits down in poverty
And writes or paints, with pity for the rich.

NORBERT.

And loves one's painting and one's writing too,
And not one's mistress! All is best, believe,
And we best as no other than we are.
We live, and they experiment on life
Those poets, painters, all who stand aloof
To overlook the farther. Let us be
The thing they look at! I might take that face
And write of it and paint it—to what end?
For whom? what pale dictatress in the air
Feeds, smiling sadly, her fine ghost-like form
With earth's real blood and breath, the beauteous life
She makes despised for ever? You are mine,
Made for me, not for others in the world,
Nor yet for that which I should call my art,
That cold calm power to see how fair you look.
I come to you—I leave you not, to write
Or paint. You are, I am. Let Rubens there
Paint us.

CONSTANCE.

So best !

NORBERT.

I understand your soul.

You live, and rightly sympathise with life,
With action, power, success : this way is straight.
And days were short beside, to let me change
The craft my childhood learnt ; my craft shall
serve.

Men set me here to subjugate, enclose,
Manure their barren lives and force the fruit
First for themselves, and afterward for me
In the due tithe ; the task of some one man,
By ways of work appointed by themselves.
I am not bid create, they see no star
Transfiguring my brow to warrant that—
But bind in one and carry out their wills.
So I began : to-night sees how I end.

What if it see, too, my first outbreak here
Amid the warmth, surprise and sympathy,
The instincts of the heart that teach the head ?
What if the people have discerned in me
The dawn of the next nature, the new man
Whose will they venture in the place of theirs,
And whom they trust to find them out new ways
To the new heights which yet he only sees ?
I felt it when you kissed me. See this Queen,
This people—in our phrase, this mass of men—
See how the mass lies passive to my hand
And how my hand is plastic, and you by
To make the muscles iron ! Oh, an end
Shall crown this issue as this crowns the first.
My will be on this people ! then, the strain,
The grappling of the potter with his clay,
The long uncertain struggle,—the success
In that uprising of the spirit-work,
The vase shaped to the curl of the god's lip,
While rounded fair for lower men to see

The Graces in a dance they recognise
With turbulent applause and laughs of heart !
So triumph ever shall renew itself ;
Ever to end in efforts higher yet,
Ever begun——

CONSTANCE.

I ever helping ?

NORBERT.

Thus !

[As he embraces her, enter the QUEEN.]

CONSTANCE.

Hist, madam—so I have performed my part.
You see your gratitude's true decency,
Norbert ? a little slow in seeing it !
Begun to end the sooner. What's a kiss ?

NORBERT.

Constance !

CONSTANCE.

Why, must I teach it you again ?

You want a witness to your dullness, sir ?

What was I saying these ten minutes long ?

Then I repeat—when some young handsome man

Like you has acted out a part like yours,

Is pleased to fall in love with one beyond,

So very far beyond him, as he says—

So hopelessly in love, that but to speak

Would prove him mad, he thinks judiciously,

And makes some insignificant good soul

Like me, his friend, adviser, confidant

And very stalking-horse to cover him

In following after what he dares not face—

When his end's gained—(sir, do you understand ?)

When she, he dares not face, has loved him first,

—May I not say so, madam ?—tops his hope,

And overpasses so his wildest dream,

With glad consent of all, and most of her

The confidant who brought the same about—
Why, in the moment when such joy explodes,
I do say that the merest gentleman
Will not start rudely from the stalking-horse,
Dismiss it with a “There, enough of you!”
Forget it, show his back unmannerly;
But like a liberal heart will rather turn
And say, “A tingling time of hope was ours—
Betwixt the fears and falterings—we two lived
A chanceful time in waiting for the prize.
The confidant, the Constance, served not ill;
And though I shall forget her in due time,
Her use being answered now, as reason bids,
Nay as herself bids from her heart of hearts,
Still, she has rights, the first thanks go to her,
The first good praise goes to the prosperous tool,
And the first—which is the last—thankful kiss.”

NORBERT.

—Constance? it is a dream—ah see you smile!

CONSTANCE.

So, now his part being properly performed,
Madam, I turn to you and finish mine
As duly—I do justice in my turn.
Yes, madam, he has loved you—long and well—
He could not hope to tell you so—'twas I
Who served to prove your soul accessible.
I led his thoughts on, drew them to their place,
When oft they had wandered out into despair,
And kept love constant toward its natural aim.
Enough—my part is played ; you stoop half-way
And meet us royally and spare our fears—
'Tis like yourself—he thanks you, so do I.
Take him—with my full heart ! my work is praised
By what comes of it. Be you happy, both !
Yourself—the only one on earth who can—
Do all for him, much more than a mere heart
Which though warm is not useful in its warmth
As the silk vesture of a queen ! fold that

Around him gently, tenderly. For him—
For him,—he knows his own part.

NORBERT.

Have you done ?

I take the jest at last. Should I speak now ?
Was yours the wager, Constance, foolish child,
Or did you but accept it ? Well—at least,
You lose by it.

CONSTANCE.

Now madam, 'tis your turn.

Restrain him still from speech a little more
And make him happier and more confident !
Pity him, madam, he is timid yet.
Mark, Norbert ! do not shrink now ! Here I yield
My whole right in you to the Queen, observe !
With her go put in practice the great schemes
You deem with, follow the career else closed—
Be all you cannot be except by her !
Behold her.—Madam, say for pity's sake

Anything—frankly say you love him. Else
He'll not believe it : there's more earnest in
His fear than you conceive—I know the man.

NORBERT.

I know the woman somewhat, and confess
I thought she had jested better—she begins
To overcharge her part. I gravely wait
Your pleasure, madam : where is my reward ?

QUEEN.

Norbert, this wild girl (whom I recognise
Scarce more than you do, in her fancy-fit,
Eccentric speech and variable mirth,
Not very wise perhaps and somewhat bold
Yet suitable, the whole night's work being strange)
—May still be right : I may do well to speak
And make authentic what appears a dream
To even myself. For, what she says, is true—
Yes, Norbert—what you spoke but now of love,

Devotion, stirred no novel sense in me,
But justified a warmth felt long before.
Yes, from the first—I loved you, I shall say,—
Strange ! but I do grow stronger, now 'tis said,
Your courage helps mine : you did well to speak
To-night, the night that crowns your twelvemonths'
toil—

But still I had not waited to discern
Your heart so long, believe me ! From the first
The source of so much zeal was almost plain,
In absence even of your own words just now
Which opened out the truth. Tis very strange,
But takes a happy ending—in your love
Which mine meets : be it so—as you choose me,
So I choose you.

NORBERT.

And worthily you choose !

I will not be unworthy your esteem,
No, madam. I do love you ; I will meet

Your nature, now I know it ; this was well,
I see,—you dare and you are justified :
But none had ventured such experiment,
Less versed than you in nobleness of heart,
Less confident of finding it in me.
I like that thus you test me ere you grant
The dearest, richest, beauteousest and best
Of women to my arms ! 'tis like yourself !
So—back again into my part's set words—
Devotion to the uttermost is yours,
But no, you cannot, madam, even you,
Create in me the love our Constance does.
Or—something truer to the tragic phrase—
Not yon magnolia-bell superb with scent
Invites a certain insect—that's myself—
But the small eye-flower nearer to the ground :
I take this lady !

CONSTANCE.

Stay—not her's, the trap—

Stay, Norbert—that mistake were worst of all.

(He is too cunning, madam!) it was I,

I, Norbert, who . . .

NORBERT.

You, was it, Constance? Then,

But for the grace of this divinest hour

Which gives me you, I should not pardon here.

I am the Queen's: she only knows my brain—

She may experiment therefore on my heart

And I instruct her too by the result;

But you, sweet, you who know me, who so long

Have told my heart-beats over, held my life

In those white hands of yours,—it is not well!

CONSTANCE.

Tush! I have said it, did I not say it all?

The life, for her—the heart-beats, for her sake!

NORBERT.

Enough! my cheek grows red, I think. Your test!

There's not the meanest woman in the world,
Not she I least could love in all the world,
Whom, did she love me, did love prove itself,
I dared insult as you insult me now.
Constance, I could say, if it must be said,
"Take back the soul you offer—I keep mine"
But—"Take the soul still quivering on your
hand,
The soul so offered, which I cannot use,
And, please you, give it to some friend of mine,
For—what's the trifle he requites me with?"
I, tempt a woman, to amuse a man,
That two may mock her heart if it succumb?
No! fearing God and standing 'neath his heaven,
I would not dare insult a woman so,
Were she the meanest woman in the world,
And he, I cared to please, ten emperors!

CONSTANCE.

Norbert!

NORBERT.

I love once as I live but once.

What case is this to think or talk about ?

I love you. Would it mend the case at all

Should such a step as this kill love in me ?

Your part were done : account to God for it.

But mine—could murdered love get up again,

And kneel to whom you pleased to designate

And make you mirth ? It is too horrible.

You did not know this, Constance ? now you
know

That body and soul have each one life, but one :

And here's my love, here, living, at your feet.

CONSTANCE.

See the Queen ! Norbert—this one more last
word—

If thus you have taken jest for earnest—thus

Loved me in earnest . . .

NORBERT.

Ah, no jest holds here !

Where is the laughter in which jests break up ?

And what this horror that grows palpable ?

Madam—why grasp you thus the balcony ?

Have I done ill ? Have I not spoken the truth ?

How could I other ? Was it not your test,

To try me, and what my love for Constance meant ?

Madam, your royal soul itself approves,

The first, that I should choose thus ! so one takes

A beggar—asks him what would buy his child,

And then approves the expected laugh of scorn

Returned as something noble from the rags.

Speak, Constance, I'm the beggar ! Ha, what's this ?

You two glare each at each like panthers now.

Constance—the world fades ; only you stand there !

You did not in to-night's wild whirl of things

Sell me—your soul of souls, for any price ?

No—no—'tis easy to believe in you.

Was it your love's mad trial to o'ertop
Mine by this vain self-sacrifice ? well, still—
Though I should curse, I love you. I am love
And cannot change ! love's self is at your feet.

[*QUEEN goes out.*]

CONSTANCE.

Feel my heart ; let it die against your own.

NORBERT.

Against my own ! explain not ; let this be.
This is life's height.

CONSTANCE.

Yours ! Yours ! Yours !

NORBERT.

You and I—

Why care by what meanders we are here
In the centre of the labyrinth ? men have died
Trying to find this place out, which we have found.

CONSTANCE.

Found, found!

NORBERT.

Sweet, never fear what she can do—
We are past harm now.

CONSTANCE.

On the breast of God.
I thought of men—as if you were a man.
Tempting him with a crown!

NORBERT.

This must end here—
It is too perfect!

CONSTANCE.

There's the music stopped.
What measured heavy tread? it is one blaze
About me and within me.

NORBERT.

Oh, some death
Will run its sudden finger round this spark,
And sever us from the rest—

CONSTANCE.

And so do well.
Now the doors open—

NORBERT.

'Tis the guard comes.

CONSTANCE.

Kiss !

SAUL.



1.

SAID Abner, "At last thou art come! Ere I tell,

ere thou speak,

Kiss my cheek, wish me well!" Then I wished it, and

did kiss his cheek.

And he, "Since the King, O my friend, for thy

countenance sent,

Neither drunken nor eaten have we; nor until from

his tent

Thou return with the joyful assurance the King

liveth yet,

Shall our lip with the honey be bright, with the

water be wet.

For out of the black mid-tent's silence, a space of
three days,
Not a sound hath escaped to thy servants, of prayer
or of praise,
To betoken that Saul and the Spirit have ended their
strife,
And that, faint in his triumph, the monarch sinks back
upon life.

2.

Yet now my heart leaps, O beloved! God's child,
with his dew
On thy gracious gold hair, and those lilies still living
and blue
Just broken to twine round thy harp-strings, as if no
wild heat
Were now raging to torture the desert!"

3.

Then I, as was meet,

Knelt down to the God of my fathers, and rose on my
feet,
And ran o'er the sand burnt to powder. The tent
was unlooped ;
I pulled up the spear that obstructed, and under I
stooped ;
Hands and knees on the slippery grass-patch, all
withered and gone,
That extends to the second enclosure, I groped my
way on
Till I felt where the foldskirts fly open. Then once
more I prayed,
And opened the foldskirts and entered, and was not
afraid,
But spoke, " Here is David, thy servant ! " And no
voice replied.
At the first I saw nought but the blackness ; but soon
I descried
A something more black than the blackness—the vast
the upright

Main prop which sustains the pavilion : and slow into
sight

Grew a figure against it, gigantic and blackest of
all ;—

Then a sunbeam, that burst thro' the tent-roof,
—showed Saul.

4.

He stood as erect as that tent-prop ; both arms
stretched out wide

On the great cross-support in the centre, that goes to
each side :

He relaxed not a muscle, but hung there,—as, caught
in his pangs

And waiting his change the king-serpent all heavily
hangs,

Far away from his kind, in the pine, till deliverance
come

With the spring-time,—so agonized Saul, drear and
stark, blind and dumb.

5.

Then I tuned my harp,—took off the lilies we twine
round its chords

Lest they snap 'neath the stress of the noontide—
those sunbeams like swords!

And I first played the tune all our sheep know, as,
one after one,

So docile they come to the pen-door, till folding be
done.

They are white and untorn by the bushes, for lo, they
have fed

Where the long grasses stifle the water within the
stream's bed;

And now one after one seeks its lodging, as star follows
star

Into eve and the blue far above us,—so blue and so
far!

6.

—Then the tune, for which quails on the cornland
will each leave his mate
To fly after the player ; then, what makes the crickets
elate,
Till for boldness they fight one another : and then,
what has weight
To set the quick jerboa a-musing outside his sand
house—
There are none such as he for a wonder, half bird and
half mouse !—
God made all the creatures and gave them our love
and our fear,
To give sign, we and they are his children, one family
here.

7.

Then I played the help-tune of our reapers, their
wine-song, when hand

Grasps at hand, eye lights eye in good friendship, and
great hearts expand

And grow one in the sense of this world's life.—And
then, the last song

When the dead man is praised on his journey—
“Bear, bear him along

With his few faults shut up like dead flowerets! are
balm-seeds not here

To console us? The land has none left, such as he on
the bier.

Oh, would we might keep thee, my brother!”—And
then, the glad chaunt

Of the marriage,—first go the young maidens, next,
she whom we vaunt

As the beauty, the pride of our dwelling.—And then,
the great march

Wherein man runs to man to assist him and buttress
an arch

Nought can break; who shall harm them, our friends?
—Then, the chorus intoned

As the Levites go up to the altar in glory
enthroned . . .

But I stopped here—for here in the darkness, Saul
groaned.

8.

And I paused, held my breath in such silence, and
listened apart ;

And the tent shook, for mighty Saul shuddered,—
and sparkles 'gan dart

From the jewels that woke in his turban at once
with a start—

All its lordly male-sapphires, and rubies courageous
at heart.

So the head—but the body still moved not, still hung
there erect.

And I bent once again to my playing, pursued it
unchecked,

As I sang,—

9.

“ Oh, our manhood’s prime vigour ! no
spirit feels waste,
Not a muscle is stopped in its playing, nor sinew un-
braced.
Oh, the wild joys of living ! the leaping from rock up
to rock—
The strong rending of boughs from the fir-tree,—the
cool silver shock
Of the plunge in a pool’s living water,—the hunt of
the bear,
And the sultriness shewing the lion is couched in his
lair.
And the meal—the rich dates—yellowed over with
gold dust divine,
And the locust’s-flesh steeped in the pitcher ; the full
draught of wine,
And the sleep in the dried river-channel where bull-
rushes tell

That the water was wont to go warbling so softly and
well.

How good is man's life, the mere living! how fit to
employ

All the heart and the soul and the senses, for ever in
joy!

Hast thou loved the white locks of thy father, whose
sword thou didst guard

When he trusted thee forth with the armies, for
glorious reward?

Didst thou see the thin hands of thy mother, held up
as men sung

The low song of the nearly-departed, and heard her
faint tongue

Joining in while it could to the witness, 'Let one
more attest,

I have lived, seen God's hand thro' a lifetime, and all
was for best...'

Then they sung thro' their tears in strong triumph,
not much,—but the rest.

And thy brothers, the help and the contest, the
working whence grew

Such result as from seething grape-bundles, the spirit
strained true !

And the friends of thy boyhood—that boyhood of
wonder and hope,

Present promise, and wealth of the future beyond the
eye's scope,—

Till lo, thou art grown to a monarch ; a people is
thine ;

And all gifts which the world offers singly, on one
head combine !

On one head, all the beauty and strength, love and
rage, like the throe

That, a-work in the rock, helps its labour, and lets the
gold go :

High ambition and deeds which surpass it, fame
crowning it,—all

Brought to blaze on the head of one creature—
King Saul ! ”

10.

And lo, with that leap of my spirit, heart, hand, harp
and voice,

Each lifting Saul's name out of sorrow, each bidding
rejoice

Saul's fame in the light it was made for—as when,
dare I say,

The Lord's army in rapture of service, strains through
its array,

And upsoareth the cherubim-chariot—"Saul!" cried
I, and stopped,

And waited the thing that should follow. Then Saul,
who hung propt

By the tent's cross-support in the centre, was struck
by his name.

Have ye seen when Spring's arrowy summons goes
right to the aim,

And some mountain, the last to withstand her, that
held, (he alone,

While the vale laughed in freedom and flowers) on a
broad bust of stone
A year's snow bound about for a breastplate,—leaves
grasp of the sheet?
Fold on fold all at once it crowds thunderously down
to his feet,
And there fronts you, stark, black but alive yet, your
mountain of old,
With his rents, the successive bequeathings of ages
untold—
Yea, each harm got in fighting your battles, each
furrow and scar
Of his head thrust 'twixt you and the tempest—all
hail, there they are!
Now again to be softened with verdure, again hold
the nest
Of the dove, tempt the goat and its young to the
green on its crest
For their food in the ardours of summer! One long
shudder thrilled

All the tent till the very air tingled, then sank and
was stilled,

At the King's self left standing before me, released
and aware.

What was gone, what remained? all to traverse 'twixt
hope and despair—

Death was past, life not come—so he waited. Awhile
his right hand

Held the brow, helped the eyes left too vacant forth-
with to remand

To their place what new objects should enter : 'twas
Saul as before.

I looked up and dared gaze at those eyes, nor was
hurt any more

Than by slow pallid sunsets in autumn, ye watch from
the shore

At their sad level gaze o'er the ocean—a sun's slow
decline

Over hills which, resolved in stern silence, o'erlap
and entwine

Base with base to knit strength more intense : so,
arm folded in arm
O'er the chest whose slow heavings subsided.

11.

What spell or what charm,
(For, awhile there was trouble within me) what next
should I urge
To sustain him where song had restored him ?—Song
filled to the verge
His cup with the wine of this life, pressing all that it
yields
Of mere fruitage, the strength and the beauty ! Be-
yond, on what fields,
Glean a vintage more potent and perfect to brighten
the eye
And bring blood to the lip, and commend them the
cup they put by ?

He saith, "It is good;" still he drinks not—he lets
me praise life,
Gives assent, yet would die for his own part.

12.

Then fancies grew rife
Which had come long ago on the pastures, when
round me the sheep
Fed in silence—above, the one eagle wheeled slow as in
sleep,
And I lay in my hollow, and mused on the world that
might lie
'Neath his ken, though I saw but the strip 'twixt the
hill and the sky :
And I laughed—"Since my days are ordained to be
passed with my flocks,
Let me people at least with my fancies, the plains and
the rocks,
Dream the life I am never to mix with, and image the
show

Of mankind as they live in those fashions I hardly
shall know !

Schemes of life, its best rules and right uses, the
courage that gains,

And the prudence that keeps what men strive for."

And now these old trains
Of vague thought came again ; I grew surer ; so once
more the string

Of my harp made response to my spirit, as thus—

13.

" Yea, my king,"

I began—"thou dost well in rejecting mere comforts
that spring

From the mere mortal life held in common by man
and by brute :

In our flesh grows the branch of this life, in our soul
it bears fruit.

Thou hast marked the slow rise of the tree,—how its
stem trembled first

Till it passed the kid's lip, the stag's antler ; then
safely outburst

The fan-branches all round ; and thou mindedst when
these too, in turn

Broke a-bloom and the palm-tree seemed perfect ; yet
more was to learn,

Ev'n the good that comes in with the palm-fruit. Our
dates shall we slight,

When their juice brings a cure for all sorrow ? or
care for the plight

Of the palm's self whose slow growth produced them ?
Not so ! stem and branch

Shall decay, nor be known in their place, while the
palm-wine shall staunch

Every wound of man's spirit in winter. I pour thee
such wine.

Leave the flesh to the fate it was fit for ! the spirit
be thine !

By the spirit, when age shall o'ercome thee, thou still
shalt enjoy

More indeed, than at first when unconscious, the life
of a boy.

Crush that life, and behold its wine running! each
deed thou hast done

Dies, revives, goes to work in the world; until e'en as
the sun

Looking down on the earth, though clouds spoil him,
though tempests efface,

Can find nothing his own deed produced not, must
every where trace

The results of his past summer-prime,—so, each ray of
thy will,

Every flash of thy passion and prowess, long over, shall
thrill

Thy whole people the countless, with ardour, till they
too give forth

A like cheer to their sons, who in turn, fill the south
and the north

With the radiance thy deed was the germ of. Carouse
in the past.

But the license of age has its limit; thou diest at
last.

As the lion when age dims his eye-ball, the rose at
her height,

So with man—so his power and his beauty for ever
take flight.

No! again a long draught of my soul-wine! look forth
o'er the years—

Thou hast done now with eyes for the actual; begin
with the seer's!

Is Saul dead? in the depth of the vale make his tomb
—bid arise

A grey mountain of marble heaped four-square, till
built to the skies.

Let it mark where the great First King slumbers—
whose fame would ye know?

Up above see the rock's naked face, where the record
shall go

In great characters cut by the scribe,—Such was Saul,
so he did;

With the sages directing the work, by the populace
chid,—

For not half, they'll affirm, is comprised there ! Which
fault to amend,

In the grove with his kind grows the cedar, whereon
they shall spend

(See, in tablets 'tis level before them) their praise,
and record

With the gold of the graver, Saul's story,—the states-
man's great word

Side by side with the poet's sweet comment. The
river's a-wave

With smooth paper-reeds grazing each other when
prophet winds rave :

So the pen gives unborn generations their due and
their part

In thy being ! Then, first of the mighty, thank God
that thou art."

14.

And behold while I sang.. But O Thou who didst
grant me that day,

And before it not seldom hast granted, thy help to
essay

Carry on and complete an adventure,—my Shield and
my Sword

In that act where my soul was thy servant, thy word
was my word,—

Still be with me, who then at the summit of human
endeavour

And scaling the highest man's thought could, gazed
hopeless as ever

On the new stretch of Heaven above me—till, Mighty
to save,

Just one lift of thy hand cleared that distance—God's
throne from man's grave!

Let me tell out my tale to its ending—my voice to my
heart,

Which can scarce dare believe in what marvels that
 night I took part,
As this morning I gather the fragments, alone with
 my sheep,
And still fear lest the terrible glory vanish like
 sleep!
For I wake in the grey dewy covert, while Hebron
 upheaves
The dawn struggling with night on his shoulder, and
 Kidron retrieves
Slow the damage of yesterday's sunshine.

15.

 I say then,—my song
While I sang thus, assuring the monarch, and ever
 more strong
Made a proffer of good to console him—he slowly
 resumed
His old motions and habitudes kingly. The right hand
 replumed

His black locks to their wonted composure, adjusted
the swathes
Of his turban, and see—the huge sweat that his coun-
tenance bathes,
He wipes off with the robe; and he girds now his loins
as of yore,
And feels slow for the armlets of price, with the clasp
set before.
He is Saul, ye remember in glory,—ere error had
bent
The broad brow from the daily communion; and still,
though much spent
Be the life and the bearing that front you, the same,
God did choose,
To receive what a man may waste, desecrate, never
quite lose.
So sank he along by the tent-prop, till, stayed by the
pile
Of his armour and war-cloak and garments, he leaned
there awhile,

And so sat out my singing,— one arm round the tent-
prop, to raise

His bent head, and the other hung slack—till I
touched on the praise

I foresaw from all men in all times, to the man
patient there,

And thus ended, the harp falling forward. Then first
I was 'ware

That he sat, as I say, with my head just above his vast
knees

Which were thrust out on each side around me, like
oak-roots which please

To encircle a lamb when it slumbers. I looked up to
know

If the best I could do had brought solace: he spoke
not, but slow

Lifted up the hand slack at his side, till he laid it with
care

Soft and grave, but in mild settled will, on my brow:
thro' my hair

The large fingers were pushed, and he bent back my
head, with kind power—
All my face back, intent to peruse it, as men do a
flower.

Thus held he me there with his great eyes that scruti-
nised mine—

And oh, all my heart how it loved him! but where
was the sign?

I yearned—" Could I help thee, my father, inventing
a bliss,

I would add to that life of the past, both the future
and this.

I would give thee new life altogether, as good, ages
hence,

As this moment,—had love but the warrant, love's
heart to dispense!"

16.

Then the truth came upon me. No harp more—no
song more! out-broke—

17.

“ I have gone the whole round of Creation : I saw and
I spoke !

I, a work of God's hand for that purpose, received in
my brain

And pronounced on the rest of his handwork—re-
turned him again

His creation's approval or censure : I spoke as I
saw.

I report, as a man may of God's work—all's love, yet
all's law !

Now I lay down the judgeship he lent me. Each
faculty tasked

To perceive him, has gained an abyss, where a dew-
drop was asked.

Have I knowledge ? confounded it shrivels at wisdom
laid bare.

Have I forethought ? how purblind, how blank, to
the Infinite care !

Do I task any faculty highest, to image suc-
cess?

I but open my eyes,—and perfection, no more and no
less,

In the kind I imagined, full-fronts me, and God is
seen God

In the star, in the stone, in the flesh, in the soul and
the clod.

And thus looking within and around me, I ever
renew

(With that stoop of the soul which in bending up-
raises it too)

The submission of Man's nothing-perfect to God's
All-Complete,

As by each new obeisance in spirit, I climb to his
feet!

Yet with all this abounding experience, this Deity
known,

I shall dare to discover some province, some gift of my
own.

There's one faculty pleasant to exercise, hard to hood-
wink,

I am fain to keep still in abeyance, (I laugh as I
think)

Lest, insisting to claim and parade in it, wot ye, I
worst

E'en the Giver in one gift.—Behold! I could love if
I durst!

But I sink the pretension as fearing a man may
o'ertake

God's own speed in the one way of love: I abstain,
for love's sake!

—What, my soul? see thus far and no farther? when
doors great and small,

Nine-and-ninety flew ope at our touch, should the
hundredth appal?

In the least things, have faith, yet distrust in the
greatest of all?

Do I find love so full in my nature, God's ultimate
gift,

That I doubt his own love can compete with it?

here, the parts shift ?

Here, the creature surpass the Creator, the end, what

Began ?—

Would I fain in my impotent yearning do all for this

man,

And dare doubt He alone shall not help him, who yet

alone can ?

Would it ever have entered my mind, the bare will,

much less power,

To bestow on this Saul what I sang of, the marvellous

dower

Of the life he was gifted and filled with ? to make

such a soul,

Such a body, and then such an earth for insphering

the whole ?

And doth it not enter my mind (as my warm tears

attest)

These good things being given, to go on, and give one

more, the best ?

Ay, to save and redeem and restore him, maintain at
the height

This perfection,—succeed with life's dayspring, death's
minute of night ?

Interpose at the difficult minute, snatch Saul, the
mistake,

Saul, the failure, the ruin he seems now,—and bid him
awake

From the dream, the probation, the prelude, to find
himself set

Clear and safe in new light and new life,—a new
harmony yet

To be run, and continued, and ended—who knows ?
—or endure !

The man taught enough by life's dream, of the rest
to make sure.

By the pain-throb, triumphantly winning intensified
bliss,

And the next world's reward and repose, by the
struggle in this.

18.

“I believe it ! ’tis Thou, God, that givest, ’tis I who
receive :

In the first is the last, in thy will is my power to
believe.

All’s one gift : thou canst grant it moreover, as
prompt to my prayer

As I breathe out this breath, as I open these arms to
the air.

From thy will, stream the worlds, life and nature, thy
dread Šabaoth :

I will?—the mere atoms despise me! and why am I loth
To look that, even that in the face too ? why is it I dare
Think but lightly of such impuissance ? what stops
my despair ?

This ;—’tis not what man Does which exalts him, but
what man Would do !

See the king—I would help him but cannot, the
wishes fall through.

Could I wrestle to raise him from sorrow, grow poor
to enrich,

To fill up his life, starve my own out, I would—
knowing which,

I know that my service is perfect.—Oh, speak through
me now!

Would I suffer for him that I love? So wilt Thou—
so wilt Thou!

So shall crown thee the topmost, ineffablest, utter-
most Crown—

And thy love fill infinitude wholly, nor leave up nor
down

One spot for the creature to stand in! It is by no
breath,

Turn of eye, wave of hand, that Salvation joins issue
with death!

As thy Love is discovered almighty, almighty be
proved

Thy power, that exists with and for it, of Being
beloved!

He who did most, shall bear most ; the strongest shall
stand the most weak.

'Tis the weakness in strength that I cry for ! my
flesh, that I seek

In the Godhead ! I seek and I find it. O Saul, it
shall be

A Face like my face that receives thee : a Man like to
me,

Thou shalt love and be loved by, for ever ! a Hand like
this hand

Shall throw open the gates of new life to thee ! See
the Christ stand ! ”

19.

I know not too well how I found my way home in the
night.

There were witnesses, cohorts about me, to left and
to right,

Angels, powers, the unuttered, unseen, the alive—the
aware—

I repressed, I got through them as hardly, as strugglingly there,

As a runner beset by the populace famished for news—

Life or death. The whole earth was awakened, hell loosed with her crews ;

And the stars of night beat with emotion, and tingled and shot

Out in fire the strong pain of pent knowledge : but I fainted not.

For the Hand still impelled me at once and supported—suppressed

All the tumult, and quenched it with quiet, and holy behest,

Till the rapture was shut in itself, and the earth sank to rest.

Anon at the dawn, all that trouble had withered from earth—

Not so much, but I saw it die out in the day's tender birth ;

In the gathered intensity brought to the grey of the
hills ;

In the shuddering forests' new awe ; in the sudden
wind-thrills ;

In the startled wild beasts that bore off, each with
eye sidling still

Tho' averted, in wonder and dread ; and the birds
stiff and chill

That rose heavily, as I approached them, made stupid
with awe !

E'en the serpent that slid away silent,—he felt the
new Law.

The same stared in the white humid faces upturned
by the flowers ;

The same worked in the heart of the cedar, and moved
the vine-bowers.

And the little brooks witnessing murmured, persistent
and low,

With their obstinate, all but hushed voices—E'en so !
it is so.

“DE GUSTIBUS—”



1.

YOUR ghost will walk, you lover of trees,
 (If loves remain)
 In an English lane,
By a cornfield-side a-flutter with poppies.
Hark, those two in the hazel coppice—
A boy and a girl, if the good fates please,
 Making love, say,—
 The happier they !
Draw yourself up from the light of the moon,
And let them pass, as they will too soon,

With the beanflowers' boon,
And the blackbird's tune,
And May, and June!

2.

What I love best in all the world,
Is, a castle, precipice-encurled,
In a gash of the wind-grieved Apennine.
Or look for me, old fellow of mine,
(If I get my head from out the mouth
O' the grave, and loose my spirit's bands,
And come again to the land of lands)—
In a sea-side house to the farther south,
Where the baked cicadas die of drouth,
And one sharp tree ('tis a cypress) stands,
By the many hundred years red-rusted,
Rough iron-spiked, ripe fruit-o'ercrusted,
My sentinel to guard the sands
To the water's edge. For, what expands
Without the house, but the great opaque

Blue breadth of sea, and not a break ?
 While, in the house, for ever crumbles
 Some fragment of the frescoed walls,
 From blisters where a scorpion sprawls.
 A girl bare-footed brings and tumbles
 Down on the pavement, green-flesh melons,
 And says there's news to-day—the king
 Was shot at, touched in the liver-wing,
 Goes with his Bourbon arm in a sling.
 —She hopes they have not caught the felons.

Italy, my Italy !

Queen Mary's saying serves for me—

(When fortune's malice

Lost her, Calais.)

Open my heart and you will see

Graved inside of it, "Italy."

Such lovers old are I and she ;

So it always was, so it still shall be !

WOMEN AND ROSES.



1.

I DREAM of a red-rose tree.
And which of its roses three
Is the dearest rose to me?

2.

Round and round, like a dance of snow
In a dazzling drift, as its guardians, go
Floating the women faded for ages,
Sculptured in stone, on the poet's pages.
Then follow the women fresh and gay,

Living and loving and loved to-day.
Last, in the rear, flee the multitude of maidens,
Beauties unborn. And all, to one cadence,
They circle their rose on my rose tree.

3.

Dear rose, thy term is reached,
Thy leaf hangs loose and bleached :
Bees pass it unimpeached.

4.

Stay then, stoop, since I cannot climb,
You, great shapes of the antique time !
How shall I fix you, fire you, freeze you,
Break my heart at your feet to please you ?
Oh ! to possess, and be possessed !
Hearts that beat 'neath each pallid breast !
But once of love, the poesy, the passion,
Drink once and die !—In vain, the same fashion,
They circle their rose on my rose tree.

5.

Dear rose, thy joy's undimmed ;
Thy cup is ruby-rimmed,
Thy cup's heart nectar-brimmed.

6.

Deep as drops from a statue's plinth
The bee sucked in by the hyacinth,
So will I bury me while burning,
Quench like him at a plunge my yearning,
Eyes in your eyes, lips on your lips !
Fold me fast where the cincture slips,
Prison all my soul in eternities of pleasure !
Girdle me once ! But no—in their old measure
They circle their rose on my rose tree.

7.

Dear rose without a thorn,
Thy bud's the babe unborn :
First streak of a new morn.

8.

Wings, lend wings for the cold, the clear !
What's far conquers what is near.
Roses will bloom nor want beholders,
Sprung from the dust where our own flesh moulders.
What shall arrive with the cycle's change ?
A novel grace and a beauty strange.
I will make an Eve, be the artist that began her,
Shaped her to his mind !—Alas ! in like manner
They circle their rose on my rose tree.

PROTUS.

AMONG these latter busts we count by scores,
Half-emperors and quarter-emperors,
Each with his bay-leaf fillet, loose-thonged vest,
Loric and low-browed Gorgon on the breast
One loves a baby face, with violets there,
Violets instead of laurel in the hair,
As those were all the little locks could bear.

Now read here. "Protus ends a period
Of empery beginning with a god:
Born in the porphyry chamber at Byzant;
Queens by his cradle, proud and ministrant.

And if he quickened breath there, 'twould like
fire

Pantingly through the dim vast realm transpire.

A fame that he was missing, spread afar—

The world, from its four corners, rose in war,

Till he was borne out on a balcony

To pacify the world when it should see.

The captains ranged before him, one, his hand

Made baby points at, gained the chief command.

And day by day more beautiful he grew

In shape, all said, in feature and in hue,

While young Greek sculptors gazing on the child

Were, so, with old Greek sculpture, reconciled.

Already sages laboured to condense

In easy tomes a life's experience :

And artists took grave counsel to impart

In one breath and one hand-sweep, all their art—

To make his graces prompt as blossoming

Of plentifully-watered palms in spring :

Since well beseems it, whoso mounts the throne,

For beauty, knowledge, strength, should stand alone,
And mortals love the letters of his name."

—Stop! Have you turned two pages? Still the same.
New reign, same date. The scribe goes on to say
How that same year, on such a month and day,
"John the Pannonian, groundedly believed
A blacksmith's bastard, whose hard hand reprieved
The Empire from its fate the year before,—
Came, had a mind to take the crown, and wore
The same for six years, (during which the Huns
Kept off their fingers from us) till his sons
Put something in his liquor"—and so forth.
Then a new reign. Stay—"Take at its just worth"
(Subjoins an annotator) "what I give
As hearsay. Some think John let Protus live
And slip away. 'Tis said, he reached man's age
At some blind northern court; made first a page,
Then, tutor to the children—last, of use
About the hunting-stables. I deduce

He wrote the little tract 'On worming dogs,'
 Whereof the name in sundry catalogues
 Is extant yet. A Protus of the Race
 Is rumoured to have died a monk in Thrace,—
 And if the same, he reached senility."

Here's John the Smith's rough-hammered head.

Great eye

Gross jaw and griped lips do what granite can
 To give you the crown-grasper. What a man!

HOLY-CROSS DAY.

ON WHICH THE JEWS WERE FORCED TO ATTEND AN ANNUAL
CHRISTIAN SERMON IN ROME.



[“Now was come about Holy-Cross Day, and now must my lord preach his first sermon to the Jews : as it was of old cared for in the merciful bowels of the Church, that, so to speak, a crumb at least from her conspicuous table here in Rome, should be, though but once yearly, cast to the famishing dogs, under-trampled and bespitten-upon beneath the feet of the guests. And a moving sight in truth, this, of so many of the besotted, blind, restive and ready-to-perish Hebrews ! now paternally brought—nay, (for He saith, ‘Compel them to come in’) haled, as it were, by the head and hair, and against their obstinate hearts, to partake of the heavenly grace. What awakening, what striving with tears, what working of a yeasty conscience ! Nor was my lord wanting to himself on so apt an occasion ; witness the abundance of conversions which did incontinently reward him : though not to my lord be altogether the glory.”—*Diary by the Bishop’s Secretary*, 1600.]

Though what the Jews really said, on thus being driven to church, was rather to this effect :

1.

FEE, faw, fum ! bubble and squeak !

Blessedest Thursday’s the fat of the week.

Rumble and tumble, sleek and rough,
Stinking and savoury, smug and gruff,
Take the church-road, for the bell's due chime
Gives us the summons—'tis sermon-time.

2.

Boh, here's Barnabas! Job, that's you?
Up stumps Solomon—bustling too?
Shame, man! greedy beyond your years
To handsel the bishop's shaving-shears?
Fair play's a jewel! leave friends in the lurch?
Stand on a line ere you start for the church.

3.

Higgledy piggedy, packed we lie,
Rats in a hamper, swine in a sty,
Wasps in a bottle, frogs in a sieve,
Worms in a carcase, fleas in a sleeve.
Hist! square shoulders, settle your thumbs
And buzz for the bishop—here he comes.

4.

Bow, wow, wow—a bone for the dog !
I liken his Grace to an acorned hog.
What, a boy at his side, with the bloom of a lass,
To help and handle my lord's hour-glass !
Didst ever behold so lithe a chine ?
His cheek hath laps like a fresh-singed swine.

5.

Aaron's asleep—shove hip to haunch,
Or somebody deal him a dig in the paunch !
Look at the purse with the tassel and knob,
And the gown with the angel and thingumbob.
What's he at, quotha ? reading his text !
Now you've his curtesy—and what comes next ?

6.

See to our converts—you doomed black dozen—
No stealing away—nor cog nor cozen !

You five that were thieves, deserve it fairly ;
You seven that were beggars, will live less sparely
You took your turn and dipped in the hat,
Got fortune—and fortune gets you ; mind that !

7.

Give your first groan—compunction's at work ;
And soft ! from a Jew you mount to a Turk.
Lo, Micah,—the selfsame beard on chin
He was four times already converted in !
Here's a knife, clip quick—it's a sign of grace—
Or he ruins us all with his hanging-face.

8.

Whom now is the bishop a-leering at ?
I know a point where his text falls pat.
I'll tell him to-morrow, a word just now
Went to my heart and made me vow
I meddle no more with the worst of trades—
Let somebody else pay his serenades.

9.

Groan all together now, whee—hee—hee!
It's a-work, it's a-work, ah, woe is me!
It began, when a herd of us, picked and placed,
Were spurred through the Corso, stripped to the waist;
Jew-brutes, with sweat and blood well spent
To usher in worthily Christian Lent.

10.

It grew, when the hangman entered our bounds,
Yelled, pricked us out to this church like hounds.
It got to a pitch, when the hand indeed
Which gutted my purse, would throttle my creed.
And it overflows, when, to even the odd,
Men I helped to their sins, help me to their God.

11.

But now, while the scapegoats leave our flock,
And the rest sit silent and count the clock,

Since forced to muse the appointed time
On these precious facts and truths sublime,—
Let us fitly employ it, under our breath,
In saying Ben Ezra's Song of Death.

12.

For Rabbi Ben Ezra, the night he died,
Called sons and sons' sons to his side,
And spoke, "This world has been harsh and strange,
Something is wrong, there needeth a change.
But what, or where? at the last, or first?
In one point only we sinned, at worst.

13.

"The Lord will have mercy on Jacob yet,
And again in his border see Israel set.
When Judah beholds Jerusalem,
The stranger-seed shall be joined to them :
To Jacob's House shall the Gentiles cleave.
So the Prophet saith and his sons believe.

14.

“ Ay, the children of the chosen race
Shall carry and bring them to their place :
In the land of the Lord shall lead the same,
Bondsmen and handmaids. Who shall blame,
When the slaves enslave, the oppressed ones o’er
The oppressor triumph for evermore ?

15.

“ God spoke, and gave us the word to keep :
Bade never fold the hands nor sleep
’Mid a faithless world,—at watch and ward,
Till the Christ at the end relieve our guard.
By his servant Moses the watch was set :
Though near upon cock-crow—we keep it yet.

16.

“ Thou ! if thou wast He, who at mid-watch came,
By the starlight naming a dubious Name !

And if we were too heavy with sleep—too rash
With fear—O Thou, if that martyr-gash
Fell on thee coming to take thine own,
And we gave the Cross, when we owed the Throne—

17.

“Thou art the Judge. We are bruised thus.
But, the judgment over, join sides with us !
Thine too is the cause ! and not more thine
Than ours, is the work of these dogs and swine,
Whose life laughs through and spits at their creed,
Who maintain thee in word, and defy thee in deed !

18.

“We withstood Christ then ? be mindful how
At least we withstand Barabbas now !
Was our outrage sore ? but the worst we spared,
To have called these—Christians,—had we dared !
Let defiance to them, pay mistrust of thee,
And Rome make amends for Calvary !

19.

“ By the torture, prolonged from age to age,
By the infamy, Israel's heritage,
By the Ghetto's plague, by the garb's disgrace,
By the badge of shame, by the felon's place,
By the branding-tool, the bloody whip,
And the summons to Christian fellowship,

20.

“ We boast our proofs, that at least the Jew
Would wrest Christ's name from the Devil's crew.
Thy face took never so deep a shade
But we fought them in it, God our aid !
A trophy to bear, as we march, a band
South, east, and on to the Pleasant Land ! ”

[*The present Pope abolished this bad business of the
sermon.*—R. B.]

THE GUARDIAN-ANGEL :

A PICTURE AT FANO.



1.

DEAR and great Angel, wouldst thou only leave
That child, when thou hast done with him, for me !
Let me sit all the day here, that when eve
Shall find performed thy special ministry
And time come for departure, thou, suspending
Thy flight, mayst see another child for tending,
Another still, to quiet and retrieve.

2.

Then I shall feel thee step one step, no more,
From where thou standest now, to where I gaze,

And suddenly my head be covered o'er

With those wings, white above the child who prays
Now on that tomb—and I shall feel thee guarding
Me, out of all the world ; for me, discarding

Yon heaven thy home, that waits and opes its door !

3.

I would not look up thither past thy head

Because the door opes, like that child, I know,
For I should have thy gracious face instead,

Thou bird of God ! And wilt thou bend me low
Like him, and lay, like his, my hands together,
And lift them up to pray, and gently tether

Me, as thy lamb there, with thy garment's spread ?

4.

If this was ever granted, I would rest

My head beneath thine, while thy healing hands
Close-covered both my eyes beside thy breast,

Pressing the brain, which too much thought expands,

Back to its proper size again, and smoothing
Distortion down till every nerve had soothing,
And all lay quiet, happy and supprest.

5.

How soon all worldly wrong would be repaired !
I think how I should view the earth and skies
And sea, when once again my brow was bared
After thy healing, with such different eyes.
O, world, as God has made it ! all is beauty :
And knowing this, is love, and love is duty.
What further may be sought for or declared ?

6.

Guercino drew this angel I saw teach
(Alfred, dear friend)—that little child to pray,
Holding the little hands up, each to each
Pressed gently,—with his own head turned away
Over the earth where so much lay before him
Of work to do, though heaven was opening o'er him,
And he was left at Fano by the beach.

7.

We were at Fano, and three times we went
To sit and see him in his chapel there,
And drink his beauty to our soul's content
—My angel with me too: and since I care
For dear Guercino's fame, (to which in power
And glory comes this picture for a dower,
Fraught with a pathos so magnificent)

8.

And since he did not work so earnestly
At all times, and has else endured some wrong,—
I took one thought his picture struck from me,
And spread it out, translating it to song.
My Love is here. Where are you, dear old friend?
How rolls the Wairoa at your world's far end?
This is Ancona, yonder is the sea.

CLEON.

“As certain also of your own poets have said”—

CLEON the poet, (from the sprinkled isles,
Lily on lily, that o’erlace the sea,
And laugh their pride when the light wave lisps
“Greece”)—

To Protos in his Tyranny: much health!

They give thy letter to me, even now:
I read and seem as if I heard thee speak.
The master of thy galley still unlades
Gift after gift; they block my court at last
And pile themselves along its portico

Royal with sunset, like a thought of thee :
And one white she-slave from the group dispersed
Of black and white slaves, (like the chequer-work
Pavement, at once my nation's work and gift,
Now covered with this settle-down of doves)
One lyric woman, in her crocus vest
Woven of sea-wools, with her two white hands
Commends to me the strainer and the cup
Thy lip hath bettered ere it blesses mine.

Well-counselled, king, in thy munificence !
For so shall men remark, in such an act
Of love for him whose song gives life its joy,
Thy recognition of the use of life ;
Nor call thy spirit barely adequate
To help on life in straight ways, broad enough
For vulgar souls, by ruling and the rest.
Thou, in the daily building of thy tower,
Whether in fierce and sudden spasms of toil,
Or through dim lulls of unapparent growth,

Or when the general work 'mid good acclaim
Climbed with the eye to cheer the architect,
Didst ne'er engage in work for mere work's sake—
Hadst ever in thy heart the luring hope
Of some eventual rest a-top of it,
Whence, all the tumult of the building hushed,
Thou first of men mightst look out to the east.
The vulgar saw thy tower ; thou sawest the sun.
For this, I promise on thy festival
To pour libation, looking o'er the sea,
Making this slave narrate thy fortunes, speak
Thy great words, and describe thy royal face—
Wishing thee wholly where Zeus lives the most
Within the eventual element of calm.

Thy letter's first requirement meets me here.
It is as thou hast heard : in one short life
I, Cleon, have effected all those things
Thou wonderingly dost enumerate.
That epos on thy hundred plates of gold

Is mine,—and also mine the little chaunt,
So sure to rise from every fishing-bark
When, lights at prow, the seamen haul their nets.
The image of the sun-god on the phare
Men turn from the sun's self to see, is mine ;
The Pæcile, o'er-storied its whole length,
As thou didst hear, with painting, is mine too.
I know the true proportions of a man
And woman also, not observed before ;
And I have written three books on the soul,
Proving absurd all written hitherto,
And putting us to ignorance again.
For music,—why, I have combined the moods,
Inventing one. In brief, all arts are mine ;
Thus much the people know and recognise,
Throughout our seventeen islands. Marvel not.
We of these latter days, with greater mind
Than our forerunners, since more composite,
Look not so great (beside their simple way)
To a judge who only sees one way at once,

One mind-point, and no other at a time,—
Compares the small part of a man of us
With some whole man of the heroic age,
Great in his way,—not ours, nor meant for ours,
And ours is greater, had we skill to know.
Yet, what we call this life of men on earth,
This sequence of the soul's achievements here,
Being, as I find much reason to conceive,
Intended to be viewed eventually
As a great whole, not analysed to parts,
But each part having reference to all,—
How shall a certain part, pronounced complete,
Endure effacement by another part?
Was the thing done?—Then what's to do again?
See, in the chequered pavement opposite,
Suppose the artist made a perfect rhomb,
And next a lozenge, then a trapezoid—
He did not overlay them, superimpose
The new upon the old and blot it out,
But laid them on a level in his work,

Making at last a picture ; there it lies.
So, first the perfect separate forms were made,
The portions of mankind—and after, so,
Occurred the combination of the same.
Or where had been a progress, otherwise ?
Mankind, made up of all the single men,—
In such a synthesis the labour ends.
Now, mark me—those divine men of old time
Have reached, thou sayest well, each at one point
The outside verge that rounds our faculty ;
And where they reached, who can do more than reach ?
It takes but little water just to touch
At some one point the inside of a sphere,
And, as we turn the sphere, touch all the rest
In due succession : but the finer air
Which not so palpably nor obviously,
Though no less universally, can touch
The whole circumference of that emptied sphere,
Fills it more fully than the water did ;
Holds thrice the weight of water in itself

Resolved into a subtler element.
And yet the vulgar call the sphere first full
Up to the visible height—and after, void ;
Not knowing air's more hidden properties.
And thus our soul, misknown, cries out to Zeus
To vindicate his purpose in its life—
Why stay we on the earth unless to grow ?
Long since, I imaged, wrote the fiction out,
That he or other God, descended here
And, once for all, showed simultaneously
What, in its nature, never can be shown
Piecemeal or in succession ;—showed, I say,
The worth both absolute and relative
Of all His children from the birth of time,
His instruments for all appointed work.
I now go on to image,—might we hear
The judgment which should give the due to each,
Shew where the labour lay and where the ease,
And prove Zeus' self, the latent, everywhere !
This is a dream. But no dream, let us hope,

That years and days, the summers and the springs
Follow each other with unwaning powers—
The grapes which dye thy wine, are richer far
Through culture, than the wild wealth of the rock ;
The suave plum than the savage-tasted drupe ;
The pastured honey-bee drops choicer sweet ;
The flowers turn double, and the leaves turn flowers ;
That young and tender crescent-moon, thy slave,
Sleeping upon her robe as if on clouds,
Refines upon the women of my youth.
What, and the soul alone deteriorates ?
I have not chanted verse like Homer's, no—
Nor swept string like Terpander, no—nor carved
And painted men like Phidias and his friend :
I am not great as they are, point by point :
But I have entered into sympathy
With these four, running these into one soul,
Who, separate, ignored each others' arts.
Say, is it nothing that I know them all ?
The wild flower was the larger—I have dashed

Rose-blood upon its petals, pricked its cup's
Honey with wine, and driven its seed to fruit,
And show a better flower if not so large.
I stand, myself. Refer this to the gods
Whose gift alone it is! which, shall I dare
(All pride apart) upon the absurd pretext
That such a gift by chance lay in my hand,
Discourse of lightly or depreciate?
It might have fallen to another's hand—what then?
I pass too surely—let at least truth stay!

And next, of what thou followest on to ask.
This being with me as I declare, O king,
My works, in all these varicoloured kinds,
So done by me, accepted so by men—
Thou askest if (my soul thus in men's hearts)
I must not be accounted to attain
The very crown and proper end of life.
Inquiring thence how, now life closeth up,
I face death with success in my right hand:

Whether I fear death less than dost thyself
The fortunate of men. "For" (writest thou)
"Thou leavest much behind, while I leave nought :
Thy life stays in the poems men shall sing,
The pictures men shall study ; while my life,
Complete and whole now in its power and joy,
Dies altogether with my brain and arm,
Is lost indeed ; since,—what survives myself ?
The brazen statue that o'erlooks my grave,
Set on the promontory which I named.
And that—some supple courtier of my heir
Shall use its robed and sceptred arm, perhaps,
To fix the rope to, which best drags it down.
I go, then : triumph thou, who dost not go !"

Nay, thou art worthy of hearing my whole mind.
Is this apparent, when thou turn'st to muse
Upon the scheme of earth and man in chief,
That admiration grows as knowledge grows ?
That imperfection means perfection hid,

Reserved in part, to grace the after-time ?
If, in the morning of philosophy,
Ere aught had been recorded, aught perceived,
Thou, with the light now in thee, couldst have looked
On all earth's tenantry, from worm to bird,
Ere man had yet appeared upon the stage—
Thou wouldst have seen them perfect, and deduced
The perfectness of others yet unseen.
Conceding which,—had Zeus then questioned thee
“ Wilt thou go on a step, improve on this,
Do more for visible creatures than is done ? ”
Thou wouldst have answered, “ Ay, by making each
Grow conscious in himself—by that alone.
All's perfect else : the shell sucks fast the rock,
The fish strikes through the sea, the snake both swims
And slides ; the birds take flight, forth range the beasts,
Till life's mechanics can no further go—
And all this joy in natural life, is put,
Like fire from off Thy finger into each,
So exquisitely perfect is the same.

But 'tis pure fire—and they mere matter are ;
It has them, not they it : and so I choose,
For man, Thy last premeditated work
(If I might add a glory to this scheme)
That a third thing should stand apart from both,
A quality arise within the soul,
Which, intro-active, made to supervise
And feel the force it has, may view itself,
And so be happy.” Man might live at first
The animal life : but is there nothing more ?
In due time, let him critically learn
How he lives ; and, the more he gets to know
Of his own life's adaptabilities,
The more joy-giving will his life become.
The man who hath this quality, is best.

But thou, king, hadst more reasonably said :
“ Let progress end at once,—man make no step
Beyond the natural man, the better beast,
Using his senses, not the sense of sense.”

In man there's failure, only since he left
The lower and unconscious forms of life.
We called it an advance, the rendering plain
A spirit might grow conscious of that life,
And, by new lore so added to the old,
Take each step higher over the brute's head.
This grew the only life, the pleasure-house,
Watch-tower and treasure-fortress of the soul,
Which whole surrounding flats of natural life
Seemed only fit to yield subsistence to;
A tower that crowns a country. But alas!
The soul now climbs it just to perish there,
For thence we have discovered ('tis no dream—
We know this, which we had not else perceived)
That there's a world of capability
For joy, spread round about us, meant for us,
Inviting us; and still the soul craves all,
And still the flesh replies, "Take no jot more
Than ere you climbed the tower to look abroad!
Nay, so much less, as that fatigue has brought

Deduction to it." We struggle—fain to enlarge
Our bounded physical recipiency,
Increase our power, supply fresh oil to life,
Repair the waste of age and sickness. No,
It skills not : life's inadequate to joy,
As the soul sees joy, tempting life to take.
They praise a fountain in my garden here
Wherein a Naiad sends the water-spurt
Thin from her tube ; she smiles to see it rise.
What if I told her, it is just a thread
From that great river which the hills shut up,
And mock her with my leave to take the same ?
The artificer has given her one small tube
Past power to widen or exchange—what boots
To know she might spout oceans if she could ?
She cannot lift beyond her first straight thread.
And so a man can use but a man's joy
While he sees God's. Is it, for Zeus to boast
" See, man, how happy I live, and despair—
That I may be still happier—for thy use ! "

If this were so, we could not thank our Lord,
As hearts beat on to doing: 'tis not so—
Malice it is not. Is it carelessness?
Still, no. If care—where is the sign, I ask—
And get no answer: and agree in sum,
O king, with thy profound discouragement,
Who seest the wider but to sigh the more.
Most progress is most failure! thou sayest well.

The last point now :—thou dost except a case—
Holding joy not impossible to one
With artist-gifts—to such a man as I—
Who leave behind me living works indeed;
For, such a poem, such a painting lives.
What? dost thou verily trip upon a word,
Confound the accurate view of what joy is
(Caught somewhat clearer by my eyes than thine)
With feeling joy? confound the knowing how
And showing how to live (my faculty)
With actually living?—Otherwise

Where is the artist's vantage o'er the king ?
Because in my great epos I display
How divers men young, strong, fair, wise, can act —
Is this as though I acted ? if I paint,
Carve the young Phœbus, am I therefore young ?
Methinks I'm older that I bowed myself
The many years of pain that taught me art !
Indeed, to know is something, and to prove
How all this beauty might be enjoyed, is more :
But, knowing nought, to enjoy is something too.
Yon rower with the moulded muscles there
Lowering the sail, is nearer it than I.
I can write love-odes—thy fair slave's an ode.
I get to sing of love, when grown too grey
For being beloved : she turns to that young man
The muscles all a-ripple on his back.
I know the joy of kingship : well—thou art king !

“ But,” sayest thou—(and I marvel, I repeat,
To find thee tripping on a mere word) “ what

Thou writest, paintest, stays : that does not die :
Sappho survives, because we sing her songs,
And Æschylus, because we read his plays ! ”
Why, if they live still, let them come and take
Thy slave in my despite—drink from thy cup—
Speak in my place. Thou diest while I survive ?
Say rather that my fate is deadlier still,—
In this, that every day my sense of joy
Grows more acute, my soul (intensified
In power and insight) more enlarged, more keen ;
While every day my hairs fall more and more,
My hand shakes, and the heavy years increase—
The horror quickening still from year to year,
The consummation coming past escape
When I shall know most, and yet least enjoy—
When all my works wherein I prove my worth,
Being present still to mock me in men’s mouths,
Alive still, in the phrase of such as thou,
I, I, the feeling, thinking, acting man,
The man who loved his life so over much,

Shall sleep in my urn. It is so horrible,
I dare at times imagine to my need
Some future state revealed to us by Zeus,
Unlimited in capability
For joy, as this is in desire for joy,
To seek which, the joy-hunger forces us.
That, stung by straitness of our life, made strait
On purpose to make sweet the life at large—
Freed by the throbbing impulse we call death
We burst there as the worm into the fly,
Who, while a worm still, wants his wings. But, no !
Zeus has not yet revealed it ; and, alas !
He must have done so—were it possible !

Live long and happy, and in that thought die,
Glad for what was. Farewell. And for the rest,
I cannot tell thy messenger aright
Where to deliver what he bears of thine
To one called Paulus—we have heard his fame
Indeed, if Christos be not one with him—

I know not, nor am troubled much to know.
Thou canst not think a mere barbarian Jew,
As Paulus proves to be, one circumcised,
Hath access to a secret shut from us ?
Thou wrongest our philosophy, O king,
In stooping to inquire of such an one,
As if his answer could impose at all.
He writeth, doth he ? well, and he may write.
Oh, the Jew findeth scholars ! certain slaves
Who touched on this same isle, preached him and
Christ ;
And (as I gathered from a bystander)
Their doctrines could be held by no sane man.

THE TWINS.

“Give” and “It-shall-be-given-unto-you.”

1.

GRAND rough old Martin Luther
Bloomed fables—flowers on furze,
The better the uncouth :
Do roses stick like burrs ?

2.

A beggar asked an alms
One day at an abbey-door,
Said Luther ; but, seized with qualms,
The Abbot replied, “ We’re poor ! ”

3.

“ Poor, who had plenty once,
 “ When gifts fell thick as rain :
“ But they give us nought, for the nonce,
 “ And how should we give again ? ”

4.

Then the beggar, “ See your sins !
 “ Of old, unless I err,
“ Ye had brothers for inmates, twins,
 “ Date and Dabitur.”

5.

“ While Date was in good case
 “ Dabitur flourished too :
“ For Dabitur’s lenten face,
 “ No wonder if Date rue.”

6.

“ Would ye retrieve the one ?

“ Try and make plump the other !

“ When Date’s penance is done,

“ Dabitur helps his brother.”

7.

“ Only, beware relapse ! ”

The Abbot hung his head.

This beggar might be, perhaps,

An angel, Luther said.

POPULARITY.



1.

STAND still, true poet that you are,
I know you ; let me try and draw you.
Some night you'll fail us. When afar
You rise, remember one man saw you,
Knew you, and named a star.

2.

My star, God's glow-worm ! Why extend
That loving hand of His which leads you,
Yet locks you safe from end to end
Of this dark world, unless He needs you—
Just saves your light to spend ?

3.

His clenched Hand shall uncloset at last
I know, and let out all the beauty.
My poet holds the future fast,
Accepts the coming ages' duty,
Their present for this past.

4.

That day, the earth's feast-master's brow
Shall clear, to God the chalice raising;
"Others give best at first, but Thou
For ever set'st our table praising,—
Keep'st the good wine till now."

5.

Meantime, I'll draw you as you stand,
With few or none to watch and wonder.
I'll say—a fisher (on the sand
By Tyre the Old) his ocean-plunder,
A netful, brought to land.

6.

Who has not heard how Tyrian shells
Enclosed the blue, that dye of dyes
Whereof one drop worked miracles,
And coloured like Astarte's eyes
Raw silk the merchant sells ?

7.

And each bystander of them all
Could criticise, and quote tradition
How depths of blue sublimed some pall,
To get which, pricked a king's ambition ;
Worth sceptre, crown and ball.

8.

Yet there's the dye,—in that rough mesh,
The sea has only just o'er-whispered !
Live whelks, the lip's-beard dripping fresh,
As if they still the water's lisp heard
Through foam the rock-weeds thresh.

9.

Enough to furnish Solomon

Such hangings for his cedar-house,
That when gold-robed he took the throne
In that abyss of blue, the Spouse
Might swear his presence shone

10.

Most like the centre-spike of gold
Which burns deep in the blue-bell's womb,
What time, with ardours manifold,
The bee goes singing to her groom,
Drunken and overbold.

11.

Mere conchs ! not fit for warp or woof !
Till art comes,—comes to pound and squeeze
And clarify,—refines to proof
The liquor filtered by degrees,
While the world stands aloof.

12.

And there's the extract, flased and fine,
And priced, and saleable at last !
And Hobbs, Nobbs, Stokes and Nokes combine
To paint the future from the past,
Put blue into their line.

13.

Hobbs hints blue,—straight he turtle eats.
Nobbs prints blue,—claret crowns his cup.
Nokes outdares Stokes in azure feats,—
Both gorge. Who fished the murex up ?
What porridge had John Keats ?

THE HERETIC'S TRAGEDY.

A MIDDLE-AGE INTERLUDE.



(*In the original*) ROSA MUNDI; SEU, FULCITE ME FLORIBUS. A
CONCEIT OF MASTER GYSBRECHT, CANON-REGULAR OF
SAINT JODOCUS-BY-THE-BAR, YPRES CITY. CANTUQUE,
Virgilius. AND HATH OFTEN BEEN SUNG AT HOCK-TIDE
AND FESTIVALS. GAVISUS ERAM, *Jessides*.

(It would seem to be a glimpse from the burning of Jacques du
Bourg-Molay, at Paris, A.D. 1314; as distorted by the refraction
from Flemish brain to brain, during the course of a couple of cen-
turies.—R.B.)

1.

PREADMONISHETH THE ABBOT DEODAET.

THE Lord, we look to once for all,

Is the Lord we should look at, all at once:

He knows not to vary, saith St. Paul,

Nor the shadow of turning, for the nonce.

See Him no other than as he is ;

Give both the Infinites their due—

Infinite mercy, but, I wis,

As infinite a justice too.

[*Organ : plagal-cadence.*

As infinite a justice too.

2.

ONE SINGETH.

John, Master of the Temple of God,

Falling to sin the Unknown Sin,

What he bought of Emperor Aldabrod,

He sold it to Sultan Saladin—

Till, caught by Pope Clement, a-buzzing there,

Hornet-prince of the mad wasps' hive,

And clipt of his wings in Paris square,

They bring him now to be burned alive.

[*And wanteth there grace of lute or clavicithern, ye
shall say to confirm him who singeth—*

We bring John now to be burned alive.

3.

In the midst is a goodly gallows built ;
 'Twixt fork and fork, a stake is stuck ;
But first they set divers tumbrils a-tilt,
 Make a trench all round with the city muck ,
Inside they pile log upon log, good store ;
 Faggots not few, blocks great and small,
Reach a man's mid-thigh, no less, no more,—
 For they mean he should roast in the sight of all.

CHORUS.

We mean he should roast in the sight of all.

4.

Good sappy bavins that kindle forthwith ;
 Billets that blaze substantial and slow ;
Pine-stump split deftly, dry as pith ;
 Larch-heart that chars to a chalk-white glow :
Then up they hoist me John in a chafe,
 Sling him fast like a hog to scorch,

Spit in his face, then leap back safe,
Sing "Laudes" and bid clap-to the torch.

CHORUS.

Laus Deo—who bids clap-to the torch.

5.

John of the Temple, whose fame so bragged,
Is burning alive in Paris square !
How can he curse, if his mouth is gagged ?
Or wriggle his neck, with a collar there ?
Or heave his chest, while a band goes round ?
Or threat with his fist, since his arms are spliced ?
Or kick with his feet, now his legs are bound ?
—Thinks John—I will call upon Jesus Christ.

[*Here one crosseth himself.*

6.

Jesus Christ—John had bought and sold,
Jesus Christ—John had eaten and drunk ;
To him, the Flesh meant silver and gold.
(*Salvâ reverentiâ.*)

Now it was, "Saviour, bountiful lamb,

I have roasted thee Turks, though men roast
me.

See thy servant, the plight wherein I am !

Art thou a Saviour ? Save thou me ! "

CHORUS.

'Tis John the mocker cries, Save thou me !

7.

Who maketh God's menace an idle word ?

—Saith, it no more means what it proclaims,
Than a damsel's threat to her wanton bird ?—

For she too prattles of ugly names.

—Saith, he knoweth but one thing,—what he knows ?

That God is good and the rest is breath ;
Why else is the same styled, Sharon's rose ?

Once a rose, ever a rose, he saith.

CHORUS.

O, John shall yet find a rose, he saith !

8.

Alack, there be roses and roses, John!

Some, honied of taste like your leman's tongue.

Some, bitter—for why? (roast gaily on!)

Their tree struck root in devil's dung!

When Paul once reasoned of righteousness

And of temperance and of judgment to come,

Good Felix trembled, he could no less—

John, snickering, crook'd his wicked thumb.

CHORUS.

What cometh to John of the wicked thumb?

9.

Ha ha, John plucks now at his rose

To rid himself of a sorrow at heart!

Lo,—petal on petal, fierce rays uncloze;

Anther on anther, sharp spikes outstart;

And with blood for dew, the bosom boils;

And a gust of sulphur is all its smell;

And lo, he is horribly in the toils
Of a coal-black giant flower of Hell!

CHORUS.

What maketh Heaven, that maketh Hell.

10.

So, as John called now, through the fire amain,
On the Name, he had cursed with, all his life—
To the Person, he bought and sold again—
For the Face, with his daily buffets rife—
Feature by feature It took its place!
And his voice like a mad dog's choking bark
At the steady Whole of the Judge's Face—
Died. Forth John's soul flared into the dark.

SUBJOINETH THE ABBOT DEODAET.

God help all poor souls lost in the dark!

TWO IN THE CAMPAGNA.



1.

I WONDER do you feel to-day
As I have felt, since, hand in hand,
We sat down on the grass, to stray
In spirit better through the land,
This morn of Rome and May ?

2.

For me, I touched a thought, I know,
Has tantalised me many times,
(Like turns of thread the spiders throw
Mocking across our path) for rhymes
To catch at and let go.

3.

Help me to hold it : first it left
The yellowing fennel, run to seed
There, branching from the brickwork's cleft,
Some old tomb's ruin : yonder weed
Took up the floating weft,

4.

Where one small orange cup amassed
Five beetles,—blind and green they grope
Among the honey-meal,—and last
Everywhere on the grassy slope
I traced it. Hold it fast !

5.

The champaign with its endless fleece
Of feathery grasses everywhere !
Silence and passion, joy and peace,
An everlasting wash of air—
Rome's ghost since her decease.

6.

Such life there, through such lengths of hours,
Such miracles performed in play,
Such primal naked forms of flowers,
Such letting Nature have her way
While Heaven looks from its towers.

7.

How say you? Let us, O my dove,
Let us be unashamed of soul,
As earth lies bare to heaven above.
How is it under our control
To love or not to love?

8.

I would that you were all to me,
You that are just so much, no more—
Nor yours, nor mine,—nor slave nor free!
Where does the fault lie? what the core
Of the wound, since wound must be?

9.

I would I could adopt your will,
See with your eyes, and set my heart
Beating by yours, and drink my fill
At your soul's springs,—your part, my part
In life, for good and ill.

10.

No. I yearn upward—touch you close,
Then stand away. I kiss your cheek,
Catch your soul's warmth,—I pluck the rose
And love it more than tongue can speak—
Then the good minute goes.

11.

Already how am I so far
Out of that minute? Must I go
Still like the thistle-ball, no bar,
Onward, whenever light winds blow,
Fixed by no friendly star?

12.

Just when I seemed about to learn !

Where is the thread now ? Off again !

The old trick ! Only I discern—

Infinite passion and the pain

Of finite hearts that yearn.

A GRAMMARIAN'S FUNERAL.

[*Time*—Shortly after the revival of learning in Europe.]



LET us begin and carry up this corpse,

Singing together.

Leave we the common crofts, the vulgar thorpes,

Each in its tether

Sleeping safe on the bosom of the plain,

Cared-for till cock-crow.

Look out if yonder's not the day again

Rimming the rock-row !

That's the appropriate country—there, man's thought,

Rarer, intenser,

Self-gathered for an outbreak, as it ought,

Chafes in the censer !

Leave we the unlettered plain its herd and crop ;

Seek we sepulture

On a tall mountain, citied to the top,

Crowded with culture !

All the peaks soar, but one the rest excels ;

Clouds overcome it ;

No, yonder sparkle is the citadel's

Circling its summit !

Thither our path lies—wind we up the heights—

Wait ye the warning ?

Our low life was the level's and the night's ;

He's for the morning !

Step to a tune, square chests, erect the head,

'Ware the beholders !

This is our master, famous, calm, and dead,

Borne on our shoulders.

Sleep, crop and herd ! sleep, darkling thorpe and croft,

Safe from the weather !

He, whom we convoy to his grave aloft,

Singing together,

He was a man born with thy face and throat,

Lyric Apollo !

Long he lived nameless : how should spring take note

Winter would follow ?

Till lo, the little touch, and youth was gone !

Cramped and diminished,

Moaned he, " New measures, other feet anon !

My dance is finished ? "

No, that's the world's way ! (keep the mountain-side,

Make for the city.)

He knew the signal, and stepped on with pride

Over men's pity ;

Left play for work, and grappled with the world

Bent on escaping :

" What's in the scroll," quoth he, " thou keepest furled ?

Shew me their shaping,

Theirs, who most studied man, the bard and sage,—

Give !"—So he gowned him,

Straight got by heart that book to its last page :

Learned, we found him !

Yea, but we found him bald too—eyes like lead,

Accents uncertain :

“ Time to taste life,” another would have said,

“ Up with the curtain ! ”

This man said rather, “ Actual life comes next ?

Patience a moment !

Grant I have mastered learning's crabbed text,

Still, there's the comment.

Let me know all. Prate not of most or least,

Painful or easy :

Even to the crumbs I'd fain eat up the feast,

Ay, nor feel queasy ! ”

Oh, such a life as he resolved to live,

When he had learned it,

When he had gathered all books had to give ;

Sooner, he spurned it !

Image the whole, then execute the parts—

Fancy the fabric

Quite, ere you build, ere steel strike fire from quartz,
Ere mortar dab brick !

(Here's the town-gate reached : there's the market-
place

Gaping before us.)

Yea, this in him was the peculiar grace

(Hearten our chorus)

Still before living he'd learn how to live—

No end to learning.

Earn the means first—God surely will contrive

Use for our earning.

Others mistrust and say—" But time escapes,—

" Live now or never ! "

He said, " What's Time ? leave Now for dogs and apes !

Man has For ever."

Back to his book then : deeper drooped his head ;

Calculus racked him :

Leaden before, his eyes grew dross of lead ;

Tussis attacked him.

"Now, Master, take a little rest!"—not he!

(Caution redoubled!

Step two a-breast, the way winds narrowly.)

Not a whit troubled,

Back to his studies, fresher than at first,

Fierce as a dragon

He, (soul-hydroptic with a sacred thirst)

Sucked at the flagon.

Oh, if we draw a circle premature,

Heedless of far gain,

Greedy for quick returns of profit, sure,

Bad is our bargain!

Was it not great? did not he throw on God,

(He loves the burthen)—

God's task to make the heavenly period

Perfect the earthen?

Did not he magnify the mind, shew clear

Just what it all meant?

He would not discount life, as fools do here,

Paid by instalment!

He ventured neck or nothing—heaven's success

Found, or earth's failure :

“ Wilt thou trust death or not ? ” he answered “ Yes.

“ Hence with life's pale lure ! ”

That low man seeks a little thing to do,

Sees it and does it :

This high man, with a great thing to pursue,

Dies ere he knows it.

That low man goes on adding one to one,

His hundred's soon hit :

This high man, aiming at a million,

Misses an unit.

That, has the world here—should he need the next,

Let the world mind him !

This, throws himself on God, and unperplexed

Seeking shall find Him.

So, with the throttling hands of Death at strife,

Ground he at grammar ;

Still, thro' the rattle, parts of speech were rife.

While he could stammer 、

He settled *Hoti's* business—let it be!—

Properly based *Oun*—

Gave us the doctrine of the enclitic *De*,

Dead from the waist down.

Well, here's the platform, here's the proper place.

Hail to your purlieus

All ye highfliers of the feathered race,

Swallows and curlews!

Here's the top-peak! the multitude below

Live, for they can there.

This man decided not to Live but Know—

Bury this man there?

Here—here's his place, where meteors shoot, clouds form,

Lightnings are loosened,

Stars come and go! let joy break with the storm—

Peace let the dew send!

Lofty designs must close in like effects:

Loftily lying,

Leave him—still loftier than the world suspects,

Living and dying.

ONE WAY OF LOVE.



1.

ALL June I bound the rose in sheaves.
Now, rose by rose, I strip the leaves,
And strew them where Pauline may pass.
She will not turn aside ? Alas !
Let them lie. Suppose they die ?
The chance was they might take her eye.

2.

How many a month I strove to suit
These stubborn fingers to the lute !

To-day I venture all I know.

She will not hear my music? So!

Break the string—fold music's wing.

Suppose Pauline had bade me sing!

•

3.

My whole life long I learned to love.

This hour my utmost art I prove

And speak my passion.—Heaven or hell?

She will not give me heaven? 'Tis well!

Lose who may—I still can say,

Those who win heaven, blest are they.

ANOTHER WAY OF LOVE.



1.

JUNE was not over,
 Though past the full,
And the best of her roses
 Had yet to blow,
 When a man I know
(But shall not discover,
 Since ears are dull,
And time discloses)
Turned him and said with a man's true air,
Half sighing a smile in a yawn, as 'twere,—
“ If I tire of your June, will she greatly care ? ”

2.

Well, Dear, in-doors with you !

True, serene deadness

Tries a man's temper.

What's in the blossom

June wears on her bosom ?

Can it clear scores with you ?

Sweetness and redness,

Eadem semper !

Go, let me care for it greatly or slightly !

If June mends her bowers now, your hand left
unsightly

By plucking their roses,—my June will do rightly.

3.

And after, for pastime,

If June be refulgent

With flowers in completeness,

All petals, no prickles,
Delicious as trickles
Of wine poured at mass-time,—
And choose One indulgent
To redness and sweetness :
Or if, with experience of man and of spider,
She use my June-lightning, the strong insect-ridder,
To stop the fresh spinning,—why, June will consider.

"TRANSCENDENTALISM :"

A POEM IN TWELVE BOOKS.



STOP playing, poet ! may a brother speak ?

'Tis you speak, that's your error. Song's our art :

Whereas you please to speak these naked thoughts

Instead of draping them in sights and sounds.

— True thoughts, good thoughts, thoughts fit to
treasure up !

But why such long prolusion and display,

Such turning and adjustment of the harp,

And taking it upon your breast at length,

Only to speak dry words across its strings ?

Stark-naked thought is in request enough—

Speak prose and holloa it till Europe hears !
The six-foot Swiss tube, braced about with bark,
Which helps the hunter's voice from Alp to Alp—
Exchange our harp for that,—who hinders you ?

But here's your fault ; grown men want thought,
you think ;
Thought's what they mean by verse, and seek in verse :
Boys seek for images and melody,
Men must have reason—so you aim at men.
Quite otherwise ! Objects throng our youth, 'tis true,
We see and hear and do not wonder much.
If you could tell us what they mean, indeed !
As Swedish Bœhme never cared for plants
Until it happed, a-walking in the fields,
He noticed all at once that plants could speak,
Nay, turned with loosened tongue to talk with him.
That day the daisy had an eye indeed—
Colloquised with the cowslip on such themes !
We find them extant yet in Jacob's prose.

But by the time youth slips a stage or two
 While reading prose in that tough book he wrote,
 (Collating, and emendating the same
 And settling on the sense most to our mind)
 We shut the clasps and find life's summer past.
 Then, who helps more, pray, to repair our loss—
 Another Bœhme with a tougher book
 And subtler meanings of what roses say,—
 Or some stout Mage like him of Halberstadt,
 John, who made things Bœhme wrote thoughts about ?
 He with a “ look you ! ” vents a brace of rhymes,
 And in there breaks the sudden rose herself,
 Over us, under, round us every side,
 Nay, in and out the tables and the chairs
 And musty volumes, Bœhme's book and all,—
 Buries us with a glory, young once more,
 Pouring heaven into this shut house of life.

So come, the harp back to your heart again !
 You are a poem, though your poem's naught.

The best of all you did before, believe,
Was your own boy's-face o'er the finer chords .
Bent, following the cherub at the top
That points to God with his paired half-moon wings.

MISCONCEPTIONS.

1.

THIS is a spray the Bird clung to,
Making it blossom with pleasure,
Ere the high tree-top she sprung to,
Fit for her nest and her treasure.
Oh, what a hope beyond measure
Was the poor spray's, which the flying feet hung to,—
So to be singled out, built in, and sung to!

2.

THIS is a heart the Queen leant on,
Thrilled in a minute erratic,

Ere the true bosom she bent on,

Meet for love's regal dalmatic.

Oh, what a fancy ecstatic

Was the poor heart's, ere the wanderer went on—

Love to be saved for it, proffered to, spent on!

ONE WORD MORE.

TO E. B. B.



1.

THERE they are, my fifty men and women
NAMING me the fifty poems finished !
TAKE them, Love, the book and me together.
WHERE the heart lies, let the brain lie also.

2.

RAFael made a century of sonnets,
MADe and wrote them in a certain volume
DINTed with the silver-pointed pencil
ELSe he only used to draw MADonnas :
THese, the world might view—but ONE, the volume.
WHo that one, you ask ? YOUR heart instructs you.

Did she live and love it all her life-time ?
Did she drop, his lady of the sonnets,
Die, and let it drop beside her pillow
Where it lay in place of Rafael's glory,
Rafael's cheek so duteous and so loving—
Cheek, the world was wont to hail a painter's,
Rafael's cheek, her love had turned a poet's ?

3.

You and I would rather read that volume,
(Taken to his beating bosom by it)
Lean and list the bosom-beats of Rafael,
Would we not ? than wonder at Madonnas—
Her, San Sisto names, and Her, Foligno,
Her, that visits Florence in a vision,
Her, that's left with lilies in the Louvre—
Seen by us and all the world in circle.

4.

You and I will never read that volume.

Guido Reni, like his own eye's apple
Guarded long the treasure-book and loved it.
Guido Reni dying, all Bologna
Cried, and the world with it, "Ours—the treasure!"
Suddenly, as rare things will, it vanished.

5.

Dante once prepared to paint an angel:
Whom to please? You whisper "Beatrice."
While he mused and traced it and retraced it,
(Peradventure with a pen corroded
Still by drops of that hot ink he dipped for,
When, his left-hand i' the hair o' the wicked,
Back he held the brow and pricked its stigma,
Bit into the live man's flesh for parchment,
Loosed him, laughed to see the writing rankle,
Let the wretch go festering thro' Florence)—
Dante, who loved well because he hated,
Hated wickedness that hinders loving,
Dante standing, studying his angel,—

In there broke the folk of his Inferno.
Says he—"Certain people of importance"
(Such he gave his daily, dreadful line to)
Entered and would seize, forsooth, the poet.
Says the poet—"Then I stopped my painting."

6.

You and I would rather see that angel,
Painted by the tenderness of Dante,
Would we not?—than read a fresh Inferno.

7.

You and I will never see that picture.
While he mused on love and Beatrice,
While he softened o'er his outlined angel,
In they broke, those "people of importance :"
We and Bice bear the loss forever.

8.

What of Rafael's sonnets, Dante's picture?

9.

This : no artist lives and loves that longs not
Once, and only once, and for One only,
(Ah, the prize !) to find his love a language
Fit and fair and simple and sufficient—
Using nature that's an art to others,
Not, this one time, art that's turned his nature.
Ay, of all the artists living, loving,
None but would forego his proper dowry,—
Does he paint ? he fain would write a poem,—
Does he write ? he fain would paint a picture,
Put to proof art alien to the artist's,
Once, and only once, and for One only,
So to be the man and leave the artist,
Save the man's joy, miss the artist's sorrow.

10.

Wherefore ? Heaven's gift takes earth's abatement !
He who smites the rock and spreads the water,

Bidding drink and live a crowd beneath him,
Even he, the minute makes immortal,
Proves, perchance, his mortal in the minute,
Desecrates, belike, the deed in doing.

While he smites, how can he but remember,
So he smote before, in such a peril,
When they stood and mocked—"Shall smiting help
us ?"

When they drank and sneered—"A stroke is easy !"
When they wiped their mouths and went their journey,
Throwing him for thanks—"But drought was pleasant."

Thus old memories mar the actual triumph ;
Thus the doing savours of disrelish ;
Thus achievement lacks a gracious somewhat ;
O'er-importuned brows becloud the mandate,
Carelessness or consciousness, the gesture.
For he bears an ancient wrong about him,
Sees and knows again those phalanxed faces,
Hears, yet one time more, the 'customed prelude—

“How should'st thou, of all men, smite, and save us?”

Guesses what is like to prove the sequel—

“Egypt's flesh-pots—nay, the drought was better.”

11.

Oh, the crowd must have emphatic warrant!

Theirs, the Sinai-forehead's cloven brilliance,

Right-arm's rod-sweep, tongue's imperial fiat.

Never dares the man put off the prophet.

12.

Did he love one face from out the thousands,

(Were she Jethro's daughter, white and wifely,

Were she but the Æthiopian bondslave,)

He would envy yon dumb patient camel,

Keeping a reserve of scanty water

Meant to save his own life in the desert;

Ready in the desert to deliver

(Kneeling down to let his breast be opened)

Hoard and life together for his mistress.

13.

I shall never, in the years remaining,
Paint you pictures, no, nor carve you statues,
Make you music that should all-express me ;
So it seems : I stand on my attainment.
This of verse alone, one life allows me ;
Verse and nothing else have I to give you.
Other heights in other lives, God willing—
All the gifts from all the heights, your own, Love !

14.

Yet a semblance of resource avails us—
Shade so finely touched, love's sense must seize it.
Take these lines, look lovingly and nearly,
Lines I write the first time and the last time.
He who works in fresco, steals a hair-brush,
Curbs the liberal hand, subservient proudly,
Cramps his spirit, crowds its all in little,
Makes a strange art of an art familiar,

Fills his lady's missal-marge with flowerets.
He who blows thro' bronze, may breathe thro' silver,
Fitly serenade a slumbrous princess.
He who writes, may write for once, as I do.

15.

Love, you saw me gather men and women,
Live or dead or fashioned by my fancy,
Enter each and all, and use their service,
Speak from every mouth,—the speech, a poem.
Hardly shall I tell my joys and sorrows,
Hopes and fears, belief and disbelieving :
I am mine and yours—the rest be all men's,
Karshook, Cleon, Norbert and the fifty.
Let me speak this once in my true person,
Not as Lippo, Roland or Andrea,
Though the fruit of speech be just this sentence—
Pray you, look on these my men and women,
Take and keep my fifty poems finished ;

Where my heart lies, let my brain lie also !
Poor the speech ; be how I speak, for all things.

16.

Not but that you know me ! Lo, the moon's self !
Here in London, yonder late in Florence,
Still we find her face, the thrice-transfigured.
Curving on a sky imbrued with colour,
Drifted over Fiesole by twilight,
Came she, our new crescent of a hair's-breadth.
Full she flared it, lamping Samminiato,
Rounder 'twixt the cypresses and rounder,
Perfect till the nightingales applauded.
Now, a piece of her old self, impoverished,
Hard to greet, she traverses the houseroofs,
Hurries with unhandsome thrift of silver,
Goes dispiritedly,—glad to finish.

17.

What, there's nothing in the moon note-worthy ?

Nay—for if that moon could love a mortal,
Use, to charm him (so to fit a fancy)
All her magic ('tis the old sweet mythos)
She would turn a new side to her mortal,
Side unseen of herdsman, huntsman, steersman—
Blank to Zoroaster on his terrace,
Blind to Galileo on his turret,
Dumb to Homer, dumb to Keats—him, even !
Think, the wonder of the moonstruck mortal—
When she turns round, comes again in heaven,
Opens out anew for worse or better ?
Proves she like some portent of an ice-berg
Swimming full upon the ship it founders,
Hungry with huge teeth of splintered chrystals ?
Proves she as the paved-work of a sapphire
Seen by Moses when he climbed the mountain ?
Moses, Aaron, Nadab and Abihu
Climbed and saw the very God, the Highest,
Stand upon the paved-work of a sapphire.
Like the bodied heaven in his clearness

Shone the stone, the sapphire of that paved-work,
When they ate and drank and saw God also !

18.

What were seen? None knows, none ever shall know.
Only this is sure—the sight were other,
Not the moon's same side, born late in Florence,
Dying now impoverished here in London.
God be thanked, the meanest of his creatures
Boasts two soul-sides, one to face the world with,
One to show a woman when he loves her.

19.

This I say of me, but think of you, Love !
This to you—yourself my moon of poets !
Ah, but that's the world's side—there's the wonder—
Thus they see you, praise you, think they know you.
There, in turn I stand with them and praise you,
Out of my own self, I dare to phrase it.
But the best is when I glide from out them,

Cross a step or two of dubious twilight,
Come out on the other side, the novel
Silent silver lights and darks undreamed of,
Where I hush and bless myself with silence.

20.

Oh, their Rafael of the dear Madonnas,
Oh, their Dante of the dread Inferno,
Wrote one song—and in my brain I sing it,
Drew one angel—borne, see, on my bosom!

THE END.



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